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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE daily increasing taste and appreciation for early Italian art has emboldened the Translator to offer a work to the English public, which, although published some years since, has, it is believed, been hitherto little known beyond a comparatively narrow circle of readers. The exquisite taste and genuine love of art displayed by the Author will not be disputed; and if his enthusiasm for his subject may have occasionally led him into a certain extravagance of language, it must be remembered that it is this very enthusiasm, and his belief in the high vocation of the religious artist, which constitute the principal charm of his work. It

was, probably, this same feeling which animated and inspired the early Christian artists; and, notwithstanding the technical difficulties with which they were surrounded, gave that surpassing purity and unearthly character to their compositions which are sought for in vain in the works of the later painters.

The Translator hopes that, from the light this work throws on the productions of certain artists but little known out of Italy, it may afford as much interest and information to the traveller who makes it the companion of his wanderings through the Italian cities as she herself derived from it, and may lead him to visit works of art in some of the less frequented localities, which might otherwise escape his attention.

It may not be out of place to remark, that this work has been referred to and quoted by more than one distinguished writer on Art. Mrs. Jameson, in the Introduction to her interesting volume on "THE POETRY OF SACRED AND LEGENDARY ART," speaks of the Author as one "to whose charming and eloquent description of Christian art I refer with ever fresh delight:" his name is one of the

few quoted by Ruskin in his second volume of "MODERN PAINTERS;" not to mention other writers, by whom his pure taste and genuine love of art have been duly appreciated, and who have not improbably been indebted for some of their information to his interesting pages, in which the spirit of Christian poetry may truly be said to breathe.

The Translator will only add, in conclusion, that if by her means this charming work becomes more generally known and appreciated, her object will have been attained and her labour rewarded.

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POETRY OF CHRISTIAN ART.

CHAPTER I.

Of Christian Painting: first in the Catacombs; afterwards in the Basilicas, dating from the reign of Constantine—Conflicting Opinions on the Types of Jesus Christ—Romano-Christian School much finer than the Byzantine School—Development of the former in opposition to the Iconoclastic Emperors, and under the auspices of the Popes and of Charlemagne—Rapid Degeneracy of the latter, and distinctive Characteristics of its Productions.

In treating of the destinies of Painting, as one form of Christian poetry, the imagination finds a wider field than when the subject is confined to a mere history of the arts of design; a history which, although it possesses in itself strong claims to our interest, fails, from the manner in which it is usually regarded, to afford any but vague and superficial results. For if painting merely consists in the power of imitating Nature by means of lines and colours, of what importance is it to the happiness or dignity of the human race, whether this imitation has been rude in one century and admirable in another?

If, on the contrary, we consider painting in the periods of its development as the imperfect but progressive expression—the voice, as it were, of the nations of modern Europe, before the formation of their language; if we reflect that in these rude works were deposited the

strongest and purest emotions of their hearts, as well as the liveliest creations of their imaginations; that it was their hope and intention that these despised works should be immortal, and render undying testimony to their enthusiasm and faith; we become less severe in our criticism of the various kinds of merit, the union of which constitutes in our judgment a chef-d'œuvre, and, fixing our attention less closely on the surface of things, we endeavour to penetrate more deeply into their nature. It is in this point of view, new to the majority of my readers, that I propose to consider my subject.

Christian painting and sculpture may be traced to the same origin. The gloom of the catacombs equally shrouds the infancy of both. It was there, amid the most solemn inspirations that the world has ever known, that the first Christian artists traced on the walls of their subterranean chapels, and on the tombs of their brethren in Christ, those rude sketches, which, if the connoisseur pass them by with disdain, will always be objects of reverence to him who has remained faithful in heart and mind to that ancient faith of which these primitive paintings are the expression or the symbol.

If the history of Art were merely a detail of the material means by the help of which the artist is enabled to imitate Nature with more or less success, we should be compelled to pass over in silence the centuries which immediately follow the establishment of Christianity. For while all things were involved in the general decay then rapidly undermining the Roman empire, the fine arts were more especially affected by the prevailing and daily increasing absence of vitality. The technical part

still survived, as does the bark of a tree when the living principle has perished, and was transmitted with more or less success from one generation to another; but the painter, like the sculptor, powerless to create, executed but half his work. He could, indeed, mould his clay, but was without the skill to infuse into it the breath of life.

Christianity at its birth being in possession of no new method, the productions of Christian art were necessarily long imbued with the same external symptoms of decay, and Christian ideas long displayed themselves in the traditional garb of antiquity. Hence arose a style that may, with more correctness, be termed *antique* than even the pagan works of the same period; at least if this term be received in its noblest acceptation, that of *simplicity* and *grandeur*—qualities which are incontestibly wanting in almost all the monuments of Roman art posterior to the second century of our era.

In reading the history of the emperors we obtain a glimpse of the degrading position occupied by the artists, in the disgusting orgies which demoralised all classes of a society greedy of corruption. Adulation and voluptuousness were the only springs of action then recognised, and the painter was generally influenced by one or the other when the subjects on which he employed his pencil were borrowed from the national religion.

What a contrast is presented in the paintings of the catacombs, under the twofold relation of direction and inspiration! And if we extend the parallel to the period when Christian Art, emerging at length from her hiding-place, freely entered the lists with paganism, our admiration is excited by the high aim, the beautiful character,

and the occasional grandeur of style displayed in these primitive compositions, which, although they bear in some respects the impress of that period of decadence, have, nevertheless, prepared the way for the Christian art of the middle ages! And, indeed, these monuments, so rude in appearance, are the oldest inheritance which our ancestors in the faith of Christ have bequeathed to us, and may be regarded as so many substantial and permanent formularies of their faith, hope, and charity. In these their fundamental principle lies bare, or is clothed in its simplest form,—a tender, affecting, and heroic principle; an idea of love, sacrifice, redemption, and eternity; a principle of life in all times and places, capable of vivifying Art at its birth, and regenerating it when in its decline.

The precarious position of the Christians in the empire, previous to the accession of Constantine, struggling with obstacles of the most arbitrary kind to the free exercise of their worship, or the open exposition of their tenets, and with the sword of persecution constantly suspended over their heads, induced them to have recourse to a cycle of allegorico-biblical representations which had reference to the fall of man, his redemption by Christ, to baptism, repentance, and the resurrection.

Regarded as the glorious termination of the painful drama enacted by the Christian on earth, the resurrection was typified by every allusion that could be borrowed from the Old or New Testament—as by the history of Jonas or Lazarus, the return of the dove with the olive-branch to the ark, the water changed to wine, the last judgment, the phœnix springing from its ashes, and the fiery car of the prophet Elijah. The good shepherd

seeking the sheep that was lost, or restoring it to the fold, seems to have been treated with peculiar predilection both by the painter and the sculptor. It was the most consoling of the Scripture parables, and on that account the most popular. In the days of trial and persecution, Art had another mission to fulfil; it was to fortify the souls of the victims against the insolent threats of their executioners and the fear of death. To this end the attention of the believer was directed to the sufferings and the resignation of Job, or to the three men in the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the lion's den; or, again, in prophetic allusion to the final triumph of Christianity, the deplorable end of the persecutor Pharaoh, drowned with his host in the Red Sea, was traced on the wall.

In going through the collections of Bosio and Bottari, we naturally expect to find in them some representations which allude to the tribulations of the early Christians, some commemoration, however indirect, of the sufferings of the martyrs; and when at length we find our expectation disappointed, we begin to discern the sublime nature of the omission, and gradually comprehend how little it occurred to men so exclusively pre-occupied with the glory of God either to hold up their courage to admiration or to curse their persecutors: a temptation to seek the praise of the world might have resulted from the representation of the frequent triumphs obtained over paganism, and thus have sullied the purity of their devotion.

The great revolution effected by Constantine could not fail to promote to an immense extent the development of Christian art, which, no longer confined within the obscure and narrow limits of the catacombs, had the

whole Roman empire for its theatre. In the vast basilicas erected at Rome, Constantinople, and in all the principal cities of the European and Asiatic provinces, infinitely larger surfaces were at the disposal of the artist than he had hitherto been required to fill; a circumstance which led to the adoption of important modifications as regarded dimensions. In addition to this, the application of the new process of mosaic discovered in the reign of Claudius, and which seemed to promise an indefinite duration to all works executed after this method, soon became universally adopted in the Christian Church, always instinctively inclined to give a preference to that which is most analogous to eternity.

Thus, Painting was employed on a very large scale in the temples, and it is in these we must seek the character which she assumed during the second period of her development. In the first place, she chose subjects analogous to the new position which Christianity now occupied. She therefore divested herself of those allegorical forms to which it had been necessary to have recourse in the times of persecution, and in order to be in harmony with the joy that was now diffused among the faithful, she everywhere painted images of beatitude and triumph. The figure of Christ was placed in all its majesty above the sanctuary; while at the same time it was engraved on the coin and medals, sometimes with the title of *King of kings*, or *Light of the world*;[1] some-

[1] Ducange is mistaken in saying that this inscription does not appear on the Byzantine money before the reign of Justinian II. We find it as early as the reign of Constantine. We first begin to see the image of the

times with the promise given miraculously to all Christian monarchs in the person of Constantine, *In hoc signo vinces.* All the attributes which are given in the Apocalypse to the Lamb without spot,—that grand and imposing scene in which appear the seven candlesticks, the four angels, the four evangelists, and the four and twenty elders prostrate before the Redeemer of the world, were represented in the churches, as if in contrast to the triumphal pomp displayed by the pagan emperors. The favourite composition of the Christians of Rome was the figure of Christ between those two pillars of the Catholic Church, St. Peter and St. Paul, who became from this time the glorious patrons of the eternal city; and, notwithstanding that these works were always more or less tinctured with the prevailing and increasing decline, they were nevertheless distinguished from the productions of pagan art by an undefinable dignity in the attitude and the character of the personages,—a dignity which was still more striking, as it was unaccompanied either by the charm of execution or by any accessory details. The fundamental idea was there in all its grandeur and simplicity. It is this pure and holy style which may indeed be said to have characterised Christian art, properly so called, in all subsequent periods. Ghirlandajo said, after having seen the ancient mosaics of Rome, that in these monuments was to be found the true painting for eternity; and Raphael himself occasionally drew inspiration from

Virgin on the money of John I., Zimisces, and on that of Michael VIII., and of Andronicus II. She is represented extending her arms toward Constantinople.

them, as may be seen in the dispute on the sacrament and in the famous cartoons for the tapestries.

This Romano-Christian school, of which a great number of works still exist in Italy, sustained itself until the invasion of the barbarians, and even to a later period, amid many complicated vicissitudes which it is very important to notice and explain.

With regard to the technical part, it must be acknowledged that, in proportion as we leave the time of Constantine, the outlines of the figures are more coarsely marked, the light and dark shadows gradually disappear, and there is less decision, boldness, and roundness in the contours. The only works which appear to have escaped these signs of decadence were some paintings in the catacombs; among others, those in the cemetery of Santa Priscilla, to which a modern writer flatters himself he has done justice in saying, "that their authors, in seeking for models, had thrown a parting glance on the chefs-d'œuvre of antiquity, and had for the last time been guided by the genius of Apelles."[1]

The source whence Christian art had drawn its inspirations, as displayed at first in the catacombs and afterwards in the basilicas, was as pure as ever, and became daily more abundant; but its regular development was interrupted by the fatal divisions which arose at this time in the bosom of the Church. A question of the highest importance to the future destinies of art was in agitation amongst the most illustrious bishops of the Roman Empire, some maintaining, with St. Cyril, that

[1] Emeric David, *Discours sur les anciens Monuments*, p. 97.

Jesus Christ was the least comely of the children of men, and resting their opinion on the authority of Tertullian[1] and of St. Justin, who had declared that the abject form which the Redeemer had assumed rendered the mystery of redemption more sublime;[2] whilst the contrary opinion was defended by the three great lights of the Latin Church,[3] and in the East by St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa, who said that Christ only veiled so much of his divinity as was necessary to prevent its dazzling the eyes of men.[4]

This controversy, smothered for a time when the fundamental doctrines of the Church were in danger, and afterwards rekindled amongst the orthodox themselves on the occasion of a truce, was prolonged until the eighth century, at which epoch Christ was described by St. John of Damascus and Pope Adrian I. as a new Adam and a model of perfection in form.[5]

As the authority of Adrian was great in the Latin Church, and was further supported by that of St. Ambrose, St. Augustin, and St. Jerome, all three venerated in the West nearly as much as the apostles, the opinion of this part of the Christian world was henceforth irrevocably fixed; and if some hideous productions of the Byzantine pencil intruded themselves at a later period, their influence did not maintain its ground against the eloquence of St. Bernard, who declared that the marvel-

[1] The expressions of Tertullian are very strong: "*Ne aspectu quidam honestus . . . Si inglorius, si ignobilis, mens erit Christus.*"

[2] Emeric David, *Discours*, etc. p. 52.

[3] Saint Augustin, Saint Jerome, and Saint Ambrose.

[4] In Cantic. Canticorum, Homil. 4.

[5] Emeric David, *ibid.* p. 67.

lous beauty of Christ surpassed that of the angels and formed the joy and admiration of the celestial spirits.[1]

Notwithstanding the authority of St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa, the contrary opinion prevailed in the East, and the monks of the order of St. Basil, out of respect to their founder, tortured their imaginations in order to represent the Saviour in all the hideousness required by their countrymen; and it is the Greeks, the descendants of those who knew so well how to conceive *the beautiful*, who had so vividly felt it and so magnificently realised it in their works of art; it is this very people who now reject *the beautiful* when raised to the highest degree by the incarnation of the Word. Unhappily, this was but the commencement of that deplorable deviation which finally plunged the Byzantine Church into schism; and from thence into an abyss of moral and intellectual degradation, from which no human power has ever been able to rescue it.

The temptation to borrow types from the masterpieces of paganism was another danger, which might have proved more fatal, if the traditional horror of the Christians for idols had not put them on their guard against these sacrilegious imitations.[2] It was again on

[1] Emeric David, *Discours*, etc. p. 67. In the figure of Christ which exists in the cemetery of St. Callisto (the most ancient representation of him by a Christian pencil), the face is of a slightly lengthened oval; the expression soft, serious, and melancholy; the hair, divided in the middle of the forehead, falls in two long masses on the shoulders. Another figure of a more recent date, and presenting almost the same features, is to be seen in a chapel of the cemetery of St. Pontiano. See *Le Discours de Raoul Rochette sur l'Art du Christianisme*, p. 25 and 26.

[2] See Tertullian, *De Idol.* ch. iii. 11.

this point that the Byzantine school was the first to transgress, and we know it is related by a local legend, that a painter, who had ventured to imitate a head of Jupiter, in order to reproduce with greater majesty that of Jesus Christ, had the hand which had been the instrument of this profanation suddenly withered, and that it was only in consequence of a miracle by the Archbishop Germadius that the use of it was restored to the artist.[1]

As regarded the representation of the Virgin, it was also the Christians of the West who were the most happily inspired, possibly because one of their greatest doctors, St. Ambrose, had affirmed more positively than any other father of the Church, that, in the mother of God, corporeal beauty had been as it were the reflexion of the beauty of the soul.[2] Thus was stated, in the clearest and most precise form, the great problem that Christian art had to solve in painting the Madonna, the various solutions of which constitute in themselves the most interesting and poetic portion of her history, and are intimately connected with the development of the glories of Mary in the ages of enthusiasm and of faith.[3]

Thus the two fundamental types of Christian painting were differently conceived in the East and in the

[1] *Discours sur l'Art du Christianisme*, par Raoul Rochette, p. 20.

[2] *Ut ipsa corporis species simulacrum fuerit mentis.*—"De Virginit." lib. ii. ch. 2.

[3] At first she was represented alone, her hands crossed on her bosom, and her eyes raised to heaven; it was not till the beginning of the fifth century (after the council of Ephesus, held in 431) that she was represented seated on a throne, with the infant Jesus in her arms or on her knees.

West, and long before the separation of the empire there already existed as profound and incurable a diversity in the views and tendencies of the artists, as in the character of the people, forming the prelude as it were to the great schism of Photius.

It was in a century of decay and corruption that Constantinople became an imperial city; treasures for its embellishment were not wanting to its founder, but he could not prevent the bad taste of the period from leaving its impress everywhere: moreover, the Greeks were indisputably the most degraded portion of his subjects, and the colonies of courtiers and adventurers attracted there from time to time by himself and his successors, could only have the effect of aggravating in a still greater degree the intellectual and moral evils of this wretched population. Christian art, it is true, became naturalised there, because the public belief created a popular demand for it; and we know that the walls of the churches and palaces were covered with paintings, representing subjects drawn from the Old and New Testament, or the history of a martyr, or of some illustrious bishop, or even with landscapes, marine subjects, and animals: we also know, that in the reign of the Emperor Honorius a Christian senator caused divers passages from the life of Christ to be painted on his toga, and that the number of figures distributed in the different groups amounted sometimes even to 600;[1] and, lastly, we know that the youth of Antioch, who abandoned the schools rather than pay the smallest compensation to the philosophers

[1] Emeric David, *Discours*, etc. p. 83.

and teachers of rhetoric, spent considerable sums in order to induce the painters, who passed their lives in the most scandalous excesses, to teach them the *art of painting with rapidity.*[1] All these facts, and many others of the same description, which at first sight seem to reveal a sort of enthusiasm for art in the Eastern Empire, are, however, only deceitful appearances, which vanish on an examination of the works which were produced from time to time by this miserable school. If, indeed, the Greek artist had known how to adopt and copy with docility the traditional compositions which came to him from Italy, and had thus shared with the latter a common existence, he might long have appropriated to himself all that distinguishes the paintings of the catacombs and early basilicas; but he seemed destined on the contrary to spoil all that he touched, and particularly the allegorical subjects so poetically invented by the pure imagination of the first Christians; and the abuse of allegory was carried so far, that the council of Constantinople, held in 691,[2] was obliged to interfere, in order to give a check where the representation of Christ was concerned —a subject on which it was to be feared that the Greek mind would be tempted endlessly to refine.[3]

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[1] Libanius, *De Professore*, t. ii. p. 95.

[2] Called "In Trullo, from the name of the palace wherein it was held; and Quinisexum, because considered as supplementary to the fifth and sixth general councils on Discipline."—Sir Harris Nicolas's *Chronology of History*, p. 213.—*Translator's note.*

[3] It is worthy of remark, that the fathers of the council were not less orthodox on the subject of art than in other respects. They wished grace to be united with truth. *Gratiam et veritatem proponimus* (can. 82),

As it had been the aim of this council to remedy an evil which did not exist in Italy, the Popes declined at first to subject themselves to those restrictions which appeared to limit as much the piety of the faithful as the imagination of the artist; and it was not until the pontificate of John VII., himself a Greek by birth, that the Roman Church, urged by the importunities of the Emperor Justinian Rhinometus, definitively adopted the decisions of this council.

It is indeed astonishing that this Romano-Christian school, the progress of which was so frequently interrupted by the invasion of the barbarians, should have been able to struggle through these centuries of continual disorganisation without being totally annihilated; it must indeed have required a peculiar vivacity of imagination in the artists to enable them to produce the new mosaics with which the Popes at that time decorated a great number of churches,[1] as well as the new paintings which were executed at the same period in the catacombs, now become the usual place of sepulture for the Roman pontiffs, and embellished by some of them with peculiar devotion.[2] Under the dominion of Theodoric and his

ut ergò quod perfectum est vel colorum expressionibus omnium oculis subjiciatur, ejus qui tollit peccata mundi, Christi Dei nostri, humana forma characterem etiam in imaginibus deinceps pro veteri agno erigi ac depingi jubemus.—Ibid.

[1] To these must be added the mosaics at Ravenna, executed under the direction of the bishops of that city. For details, see the *Liber Pontificalis* of Agnellus, in Muratori Script. Rerum Ital. t. ii. p. 1.

[2] John I., Felix IV., and especially John III., are cited as the authors of the restorations and embellishments which were carried on in the catacombs of San Marcellino and of Santa Priscilla, after the conquest of Italy by the Goths.

successors, the decline of art was hardly perceptible, and was the result of causes entirely independent of the conquest; for not only did the King of the Goths show himself a zealous preserver of monuments of every kind, but further desired that the temples, porticoes, and palaces built by his command at Pavia, Ravenna, and Monza, should be decorated with paintings appropriate to the destination of the different edifices. The Lombards who came afterwards, and who left behind them such fine architectural monuments, were probably, from being Arians, much less favourable to painting;[1] in the eighth century, however, it is evident that their opinions upon this point had undergone considerable modification, since their king Astolfo protected and rewarded the painter Ariperto of Lucca, whose name alone announces the beginning of an initiation in the Germanic races.[2]

Byzantium always exercised a most pernicious influence on art in Italy. The conquest of this unhappy country under Justinian, far more fatal in its consequences than that of the Goths, interrupted for a time the ancient traditions,[3] which were afterwards slowly

[1] The decadence now becomes much more perceptible (especially in the technical parts), as the remains in the chapel of John VII. preserved in the crypt of the Vatican, and the mosaics of the church of St. Agnese fuori le Mura, executed in the seventh century under the Pope Honorius, sufficiently prove.

[2] Brunetto, *Cod. Diplom. Toscano*, p. i. c. 3, § 7. Queen Theodolinda also caused to be painted on the walls of the palace of Monza the leading features in the history of the Lombards. The paintings in the church of St. Nazaro at Verona were executed about the same period.

[3] Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, t. i. p. 183. This is undoubtedly the most remarkable work that has been published for many years on the Christian art of the middle ages. I have often made use of it as a

and with difficulty revived. Subsequently, after a lapse of two centuries, broke forth that fearful storm excited by the Iconoclastic emperors, which almost stifled Christian art in its cradle. Leo the Isaurian, who, from his rustic education and his intercourse with Jews and Arabs, had acquired a hatred to images, and ambitious also of imitating the Calif Jezid, who had recently destroyed them throughout the whole of Syria, determined to purge his own states from what he termed a scandalous idolatry. After having vented his first fury upon a crucifix placed in the vestibule of his palace, he despatched emissaries, with whose fanaticism and ferocity he was acquainted, to the islands of the Archipelago, and into all the provinces of his empire. The monks, whose preaching was all-powerful with the people, were the objects of a special animosity. Not content with closing the convents, confiscating their property, and turning their edifices into magazines or barracks, in order to gratify the cruelty of the prince as well as his avarice, they laid violent hands on the defenceless monks, and if, satiated at length with blood, they spared the lives of any, they either mutilated them or tore out their beard or eyes.

A few witnesses of these bloody scenes arrived in Italy from Greece, and related what they had seen. The indignation which this recital awakened reached its height when the brutal summons of the Emperor was received, in which he threatened to break the venerated image of St. Peter in pieces, and to drag Pope Gregory

guide in the researches I have made on the spots, and I am indebted to it for the knowledge of many works of art of which otherwise I might never have even suspected the existence.

loaded with chains to the foot of the imperial throne. An enthusiasm, only to be compared to that which led to the Crusades, spread rapidly from Rome to Ravenna, from Ravenna to Venice, and even infected the Lombards themselves, who were not unwilling to participate in the advantages of this holy war: preparations of defence were hastily made by land and sea; the statues of the tyrant were thrown down; and the people, having taken an oath to live and die in defence of the Pope and of the holy images, awaited with firmness the squadron and army which had set out from Constantinople, while the women and clergy offered up prayers, clothed in sack-cloth and ashes.

It is not, indeed, without reason that the memory of the triumph obtained on this occasion over the Iconoclasts has been immortalised by the convocation of a council and the institution of an annual fête. If the Greeks had conquered, Italy could never have worked out her high destiny; the glory and independence of the Papacy would have been extinguished, and the marvels of Christian art would never have been produced; the Byzantine impress would have been upon everything, and, perhaps, not less indelibly than in Russia, where nothing has ever been able to efface it. One important city alone, that of Naples, embraced the imperial cause in this war, and it was precisely there that the impress of the Byzantine style was the most durable and profound. It would, indeed, seem as if each locality had been rewarded according to its deeds; for while, on the one hand, we find the Neapolitans gifted only with a small portion of the heritage of poetry bequeathed by Christianity to modern Italy, so,

on the other, we see Venice and Lombardy display in the finest works of art the treasures of their brilliant imagination; and at Rome the pontifical tiara rises more radiant than all the other crowns, and sheds from afar its beams of light upon all the nations which are predestinated to move in the glorious sphere of Catholicism.[1]

The rage of the Iconoclastic emperors thus became a real benefit to the people whom Providence designed should exercise an influence over the future destinies of the world; it was equally beneficial ultimately, although not immediately, to the progress of art, because the fugitive monks, for whom the Popes founded vast monasteries, belonged for the most part to the order of St. Basil, in which were a great number of artists imbued with the fatal ideas which we have already noticed. It was probably to counteract their influence that Pope Adrian I. so openly declared himself in favour of the tradition which regarded Christ as the ideal of perfection in form.

The Iconoclastic war, carried on for more than a century by the Eastern emperors, was followed by a very natural reaction, and Italy produced more images than ever. The Greek monks, who were living there in a voluntary exile, consoled themselves by an occupation which proscription had rendered still more dear to them; even the minds of the Lombards had at length become susceptible to enjoyments of this kind, owing to the part they had taken in the dispute with the Iconoclasts.

[1] Gibbon has nowhere exhibited greater dishonesty and partiality than in the recital of this war, which was susceptible of dramatic interest if the historian had not taken pains to place his subject in a false light.

Their king, Luitprand, caused the church of San Pietro in Cielo d'oro at Pavia to be decorated with magnificence, and each new Pope, on his accession, showed his zeal to tread in the footsteps of his predecessors, by causing new paintings to be executed in the basilicas or in the catacombs.[1]

At this juncture Charlemagne appeared, whose genius was a sort of equipoise held in reserve by Providence against all that remained of paganism in the West. Then began in the language and in the arts the great crisis of decomposition, without which the intimate fusion of so many heterogeneous elements could never have taken place. For as it was necessary that the *transpositive* language of the Latins should fall as it were to pieces, in order that *analogous* languages should rise from its ruins, so it was essential that ancient art, with its methods and types, should be entirely lost sight of by the Christian artists, in order that they might be able to attain to those original and sublime conceptions which distinguish the schools of the middle ages.

This labour of transformation, which modern philosophy has termed the *long sleep of the human intellect*, deserves to be followed in its progress and in its various phases, and the history of painting (although composed of facts which at first sight appear very secondary) exhibits it quite as clearly as that of architecture, poetry, or language.

About the opening of the ninth century, that is to

[1] The most zealous amongst them were Gregory III., Adrian I., and Leo III. Benedict III., who died in 858, appears to have been the last pope who caused any works to be executed in the catacombs.

say, from the coronation of Charlemagne, we begin to recognise a new element, which manifests itself from this time in every combination. This element, the Germanic, infused new blood into the impoverished veins of the ancient world, and its co-operation was indispensable to that regeneration of art for which the diffusion of Christianity and the mixture of races had already prepared the way. We have, consequently, to notice the rise of a Germano-Christian school; but first we must cast a farewell glance, and pay the last honours to the Romano-Christian school, in order afterwards to salute at our leisure the dawn of the Renaissance.

The important reparations executed under the orders of Adrian I., and the new constructions undertaken by Leo III., were the first-fruits of the peace secured to the Roman Church by Charlemagne. It was at this time that the great mosaic, of which considerable remains still exist,[1] was executed in a hall of the palace of the Lateran. The primitive traditions of Christian art may easily be recognised in the figure of Christ, and in those of St. Peter and St. Paul. There is a certain purity of outline, and an effort to give both the light and dark shadows. As to the portraits of Constantine and Charlemagne, it is evident that they have only been added to render the allegorical meaning complete, which has here all the clearness of a page of history. This monument, so precious in itself, becomes more so in consequence of

[1] On the Piazza of St. John Lateran. To a Christian who can form a conception of the grandeur of Catholicism and of that of Charlemagne, the benediction of the Pope, received amid objects so fitted to exalt the imagination, is an event which can never be forgotten.

the destruction of all the works of the same kind executed under the pontificate of Leo III. in the chapel of his palace, under the portico of Santa Suzanna, and in the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, in which last they have been replaced by the admirable frescoes of Pinturicchio.

In order to judge how rapid was the decline of this school, the mosaics in the church of Santa Prassede must be afterwards visited, which, although executed only a few years later, are already as it were a prelude to the barbarism of the three following centuries. About the same time the works in the catacombs were finally abandoned, and the dread of that catastrophe which was expected to happen in the year 1000, paralysing the imagination of the artists more and more as the end of the world approached, occasioned a long interval in the production of works of art, which in fact did not begin to re-appear until the middle of the eleventh century. But it is evident that painting had gained no new vigour during this interval of repose; two rolls of parchment, one of which is preserved in the library of the Barbarini Palace, the other in the sacristy of the cathedral of Pisa, are ornamented with miniatures which may serve to give us an idea of the state into which the arts of design were then fallen. Those which were executed rather later in the manuscript of a poem on the Countess Matilda, which is preserved in the Vatican,[1] display no trace either of chiaroscuro or of correct

[1] No. 4922. The name of the author of the poem is Donizo, who composed it in 1125. The miniatures have been engraved and somewhat embellished by Agincourt, pl. 66.

imitation of form. Works of larger dimensions, always more carefully treated because they were exposed to public view, shared the sad fate of the inferior branches. In the interval between the twelfth and the thirteenth century, the evil seems to have attained its greatest height, and as a proof of the extreme degradation of the period it will be sufficient to mention, among other monuments, the mosaics in the church of *Sancta Francesca Romana*, close to the arch of Titus, those of San Lorenzo without the walls, and also the half-effaced paintings which are under the portico of this basilica.[1] The Romano-Christian school ceased from this time to exist, after having fulfilled the whole of its mission, which had been to form the connecting link between the primitive inspirations of Christian art and the new schools which were destined to reap the harvest of this rich inheritance, and turn it to good account.

As for the Germano-Christian school, it may be compared to a vigorous shoot severed from a dying trunk, to revive and flourish in a better soil. Long before the reign of Charlemagne, the custom of painting the interior of churches had made great progress in Gaul, and a curious passage in the poet Fortunatus would even seem to prove that there existed a sort of rivalry between the ultramontane artists and the national artists, or those of barbarous origin,[2] Gregory of Tours, when he caused the basilica of St. Perpetuus to be rebuilt

[1] I intentionally omit the mosaics of the church of Santa Sabina, which are less faulty, although executed at the same period.

[2] *Quod nullus veniens Romanâ gente fabrivit*
Hoc vir barbarica prole peregit opus.—Lib. ii. Carm. 9.

and decorated with paintings, also gave the preference to these last;[1] and everything inclines us to the belief that the decorations of the churches of Toulouse, Saintes, Bordeaux, and St. Germain-des-Prés, were not the work of foreign pencils.

The accession of Charlemagne gave a new impulse to the fine arts throughout the whole extent of his empire; the mission of inspecting the churches and paintings formed a part of the functions of the royal envoys employed to travel through the provinces. Works of this kind must have spoken very powerfully to the imagination of Charlemagne, since, even when encamped, he caused the interior of his oratory to be painted. He made use of this means in order to facilitate and confirm the labours of his missionaries among the Saxons, everywhere stimulating the zeal of the artists and bishops, and not content with exercising his own zeal in the dominions belonging to him, and determining in his capitularies the mode in which contributions for the different works of painting were to be levied, he constituted himself the protector of the arts with foreign princes,[2] and exerted himself to propagate them in distant regions, as one of the glories and benefits of Christianity.

It is not on this side of the Alps, after the lapse of a thousand years, that we must seek for well-authenticated remains of the great works which Charlemagne or his

[1] *Gregorius ego indignus basilicas S. Perpetui adustas incendio reperi, quas in illo nitore vel pingi vel exornari ut priùs fuerant* artificum nostrorum opere *imperavi.*—" Hist. Eccl. Franc." lib. x. c. 21, § 19.

[2] He invited Offa, one of the kings of the Saxon heptarchy, to encourage painting, but the soil was unfavourable.

successors caused to be executed; those which have not been buried under the ruins of the edifices themselves have perished from the decomposing action of a climate, which, among the monuments of art, only seems to respect granite: but in default of those great compositions which covered the walls of the temples or palaces, we have inestimable manuscripts ornamented with miniatures, of the date of which there cannot exist the slightest doubt, since the prologue which is at the commencement states that the work was undertaken by the orders of Charlemagne.[1] No imitation of the antique is observable, either in the conception which is original and free, or in the character, which has something northern about it, or even in the costume, which appears to be that of the Franks; and the name of the artist alone would be sufficient to reveal his race, even if he had not boasted in his prologue that he equalled, if he did not surpass, the artists of Ausonia.[2]

Examples abound which prove that this inferior branch of art was always progressing under the Carlovingian dynasty. In order to convince ourselves of this, it is only necessary to cast our eyes on the Psalter preserved in the library of Vienna, (the work of a German painter named Dagulf), on the Gospels of

[1] I will mention the Latin Bible, which is preserved in the monastery of San Calisto at Rome. On the first sheet is the portrait of Charlemagne, in which a certain individuality begins to be perceptible. The subjects of the miniatures are taken from the Old Testament. Some idea may be formed of it by consulting *Antiquités de Montfaucon*, t. i. p. 175, or Agincourt, t. iii. peinture 2me partie, pl. 40, et suiv.

[2] *Ingobertus eram, ...*
Graphidus Ausonias æquans superansve tenore.

Charles the Bold, preserved in the Munich library, together with other treasures of the same period; or even on the Hours of Queen Emma, which is more within our reach, and is a real chef-d'œuvre for the time at which it was executed; or better still, on the Benedictional (unfortunately but little known) of the monk Godemann, who seems to have surpassed in the elegance and delicacy of his pencil all the miniature painters most in repute during the tenth century.[1]

A kind of central school appears to have formed itself at this period in the famous monastery of St. Gall; where two caligraphic painters had acquired celebrity as early as the ninth century, and where the traditions left by them had been collected by the monk Notker, who cultivated poetry and painting with equal success; by the monk Tutilon, who was at once painter, poet, musician, carver, and statuary; and by the monk John, who was invited to Aix-la-Chapelle by the emperor Otho to paint an oratory, and whose services were afterwards rewarded with the bishopric of Liège. The union of high ecclesiastical dignities with pre-eminence in the cultivation of art was still more frequent in the eleventh century, a period of redoubled activity for those whose imaginations had been paralyzed by the

[1] This Godemann, at first chaplain to the Bishop of Winchester, from 963 to 984, was afterwards abbot of Thornley. His Benedictional, ornamented with about thirty miniatures of the greatest beauty, is at present in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire. I believe that the city of Rouen possesses another manuscript by the same author.

expectation that the end of the world was approaching. Heldric and Adelard—the one, abbot of St. Germain d'Auxerre, the other, abbot of St. Tron—were celebrated in their time as painters of miniatures; and his episcopal functions did not prevent St. Berward, bishop of Hildesheim, from painting with his own hands the walls and ceilings of his church, and from forming pupils, who afterwards accompanied him to the courts whither he was sent as ambassador. We also find that his successor, Godeschard, founded a school of painting in his palace; an example subsequently followed by the bishop of Paderborn; while the monk Thiémon, after having employed his pencil in the decoration of a great number of convents, took his seat as a mitred archbishop on the archiepiscopal throne of Saltzburg.

All these facts, and many others, which it would be easy to accumulate, prove that art had exercised a more than transient influence on the minds of the German people; and that it had, even at this time, taken deep root among them. Far from being the more or less servile imitators of the works executed at Byzantium or in Italy, as has been asserted, and too frequently repeated, they had the advantage over these two countries of being able to make a free use of all that could be derived from Christianity and from their own resources, without being fettered by that accumulation of antiquated traditions which so long embarrassed the progress of the ultramontane artists. Neither can the Byzantine and Italian works from the ninth to the thirteenth century bear a comparison with the contem-

poraneous productions of the Germano-Christian school,[1] which was at once more felicitous in its methods, more pure in the choice of its forms, and of greater fertility in its inventions. Its tendency was rather historical than mystical, which would necessarily be the case with a people but little familiarized as yet with the charms of contemplation; a preference was, therefore, everywhere given to the animated scenes of the Old Testament, both in the paintings of the manuscripts and in those of the churches and palaces. The Synod of Arras, held in 1205, had in some measure consecrated this tendency, already so consonant to the national taste, by declaring that painting was the book of the ignorant, who knew not how to read in any other,[2] and the characters of this popular writing were therefore multiplied without end, in every size, and under all forms; and such was soon the magnificence and multiplicity of this kind of ornament, that the monks of Citeaux, in their pious simplicity, thought it their duty to point out as a dangerous abuse the continually increasing luxury displayed by the bishops, who vied with one another in the decoration of the religious edifices.[3] But the thirst for art was much too irresistible in this newly-formed people for it to be possible to con-

[1] Rumohr may be consulted on the German art of the period.—*Italienische Forschungen*, t. i. p. 233, et suiv.

[2] *Illiterati quod per Scripturam non possunt intueri hoc per quædam picturæ lineamenta contemplantur.*—Quoted by Emeric David, *Discours historiques sur la Peinture moderne*, p. 205.

[3] St. Bernard attacked with much greater reason the custom then in use of painting centaurs, hunting-scenes, and pagan arabesques on the walls of certain convents.

vert them on this point, and the inopportune zeal of the preachers only caused them to be regarded by the monks of other orders as innovators, and promoters of scandal and schism.[1]

In order to obviate the inconveniences of a climate which, in the north of France and Germany, did not permit many succeeding generations to enjoy a work of art in all its original freshness, advantage was taken, as early as the end of the tenth century, of two valuable discoveries; namely, the fabrication of carpets and hangings for the decoration of the churches,[2] and the art of painting on glass. That we are indebted to the inventive genius of the Orientals for the first-mentioned branch of industry, is an opinion supported by very plausible arguments: on the other hand, one essential difference will always remain, which is, that in the East these productions have always been considered as an object of luxury, but in the West, as an object of art; but with regard to the second discovery, its origin is neither doubtful to the antiquary who has fairly weighed the opposing pretensions to which this controversy has given birth, nor to the traveller who has been able to compare the painted glass of our cathedrals with that of Italy,

[1] *Ab omnibus vicinis monachis tanquàm novarum rerum inventores et scandali schismatisque inventores reputabantur.* — Mabillon, *Annal. Ord. S. Bened.* t. v. p. 531.

[2] A manufactory existed about the year 985 at the abbey of St. Florent de Saumur, in which the monks employed themselves in weaving tapestries ornamented with flowers and animals. In the year 1025 there was another at Poictiers, to which the prelates of Italy sent commissions. See *Le Discours historique d'Emeric David*, at the commencement of the *Musée Français*, p. 80.

Germany, and England.[1] The glory of this last discovery belongs, then, exclusively to France, and certainly it is no small contribution to the development of modern art, and to the majesty of catholic worship, to have placed the imagination of the Christian in prayer under the mysterious charm of this "dim religious light," so favourable to meditation, and to have, in some degree, realized for him a portion of the marvels of the heavenly Jerusalem; not to speak of the facility such vast surfaces afforded, either to immortalise great historical recollections, as at St. Denis, where the abbot Suger caused to be painted on the windows of the choir the principal exploits of the first Crusaders,[2] or to familiarise the faithful with the facts and dogmas of religion, which was the desire of the curé of St. Nixier at Troyes, who recorded in an inscription, which was formerly legible above the principal doorway, that he had caused three windows to be painted, *pour servir de catéchisme et instruction au peuple.*[3]

Assuredly, it is unnecessary to explain the introduction of art into the northern portion of the vast empire of Charlemagne, by the marriage of a Byzantine princess with an emperor of Germany; and it is vain to accumulate historical testimony in order to prove that communications or interchanges of this nature did really take

[1] For information on the French artists who were invited to paint windows in foreign countries, *L'Essai sur la Peinture sur Verre*, par Langlois, p. 8, may be consulted; and also the *Biographie des Peintres verriers*, at the end of the same work.

[2] See Montfaucon, *Monumens de la Monarchie française*, t. i. pl. 50–54.

[3] *Essai sur la Peinture sur Verre*, p. 16.

place: the question of the originality of the schools which appeared in France, at Cologne, in Belgium, and elsewhere, must still remain doubtful. If the Greek painters were as popular in the West as certain writers, the dupes of their gratitude, have pretended, how is it that the abbot Suger, in the enumeration he has left us of French, German, and Italian artists, invited by him to work at the basilica of St. Denis, does not mention a single Byzantine artist? and why are the contemporary chronicles equally silent with respect to so many other monuments of the same kind, which the piety of the people and the munificence of the kings multiplied, as if by enchantment, on the surface of the soil?

To avoid the necessity of any further allusion to the wearisome subject of Byzantine art, we will endeavour to point out, as far as we are able, its last vestiges in Italy, from the accession of Charlemagne to the creation of the first modern school.

Whenever we meet with a Madonna of a blackish hue, dressed in the Oriental manner, with pointed and disproportionately elongated fingers, bearing a deformed infant in her arms, the whole painted in a style much resembling that of the Chinese; or a Christ on the Cross, which would seem to have been copied from a recently exhumed mummy, did not the streams of blood which flow from each wound, on a greenish and cadaverous body, announce that life is not yet extinct; in both these cases it may be affirmed, without fear of mistake, to be a work conceived by Greek artists, or executed under their influence. But in subjects in which there was not the same reason for dwelling on such hideous details, it

is not always possible to pronounce with the same boldness at the first glance, and it then becomes necessary to compare the productions of the two schools more closely with one another.

It is particularly in the great works executed in mosaic, and much better preserved than pictures properly so called can have been, that we are enabled to carry out this comparative appreciation. In all the productions of the Romano-Christian school, the Roman costume is pretty faithfully observed in the figure of Christ, and in those of the apostles and prophets; and the Virgin herself is constantly attired as a Roman matron:[1] whilst the same personages in the Byzantine representations are generally enveloped in heavy and magnificent garments, the choice of which has been determined by a taste at once oriental and barbarous.

The Greek artists dazzled the eye with gold grounds, which often covered very large surfaces, on which appeared drawn, with more or less skill, the comparatively pale figure of the Redeemer. The throne of God, and that of the Virgin, was covered by them with gilding; and as early as the tenth century, this profusion of ornament in gold is already observable in their manuscripts and miniatures.[2]

In the mosaics of the Romano-Christian school the grounds are almost always white; or, if gold is sometimes employed, it is only to mark the luminous points in the

[1] A very ancient example of this, perhaps the most ancient, may be seen in a chapel of the church of Santa Prassede at Rome.

[2] This profusion of gold was not introduced into the Latin manuscripts until the commencement of the thirteenth century.

clouds and draperies.[1] If to this we join the singular predilection of the Greeks for long and meagre figures, and the common character which marks the heads of their saints, generally void of expression, we shall have recapitulated the most characteristic features of Byzantine art in the period which occupies our attention.

A seductive argument has been more than once urged in favour of this Byzantine style. Since it survived the Romano-Christian school, it must have possessed more internal life, and the Italians themselves were forced to do homage to their rivals when they invited painters from Constantinople to establish themselves among them, who shed light upon the surrounding darkness, and gave the initiative to the genius of Cimabue!

How many sophisms, much more fatal than this, have acquired authority in the world, under favour of certain false metaphors! It is true that the Byzantine school maintained itself at about the same point during the whole duration of the Lower Empire, whilst the school which had originated in the catacombs appeared to expire like a lamp which is no longer supplied with oil. But let us not deceive ourselves on this point: amongst a people who had embraced Christianity in all its fulness, it was impossible for art to die so long as the imaginations were animated by faith; it was the traditions borrowed from an order of ideas which had for ever disappeared, which were destined to expire: but the genius of Christianity, in refusing to be clothed in a form which only befitted its infancy, gave no sign on that account of declension or

[1] As in the mosaic in the church of San Cosimo e Damiano, in the Forum.

languor; on the contrary, it was the consciousness of strength which enabled it to disembarrass itself of antiquated forms, sure of creating new ones better adapted to the high mission it was called to fulfil. It was a death destined to be followed by a glorious resurrection.

But in the interval that elapsed there was a kind of void, during which the Byzantine school, left, so to speak, without a rival, at least in Italy, naturally enjoyed a peculiar favour; and this explains the superiority of the Greek Calendar of the emperor Basil over the greater number of the contemporaneous miniatures,[1] as well as the frequent employment of Greek artists in the decoration of the Italian basilicas, from the tenth to the thirteenth century. If all the works which they then executed have been so many stimulants to the people who had these pretended masterpieces before their eyes, how is it that the reawakening of Italy did not commence at Venice, so early and so abundantly supplied with the productions of Byzantine art of every kind; or at the no less favoured cities of Naples and Amalfi, by whom Constantinople was regarded, even in the middle ages, as a kind of mother country? How is it that the Neapolitan school, with all the advantages of so close a connexion, makes such a poor figure in the history of art, that we are justly tempted to doubt its very existence?

[1] This Calendar, a work of the tenth century, is in the Vatican library. It contains the most ancient representations known of the deaths of the martyrs. The decapitation of St. Eudoxa, St. Romulus, &c. is very well given; there is a fine head of St. Gregory, and some rather striking figures of the patriarchs.

We may also mention a calendar in mosaic of the same period, which is preserved in the Guarda roba of the church of San Giovanni at Florence.

and why is the Venetian school the latest of all? With regard to Cimabue, in the first place, the glory of having founded the Florentine school does not belong to him; and in the next, we may remark that he deviated very considerably from that stiff, and, in some measure, hieratic style, to which the Byzantine artists had so scrupulously conformed themselves, and that it was precisely this startling innovation which excited the enthusiasm of the Florentines.

It is at Pisa that we must seek the most servile imitator of the Byzantine manner, in the painter Giunta, who was almost as celebrated as Cimabue at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but who was incapable of founding anything which approached to a school. Assuredly, it was not popularity which was wanting to him; for, in addition to the numerous pictures which he painted in his own country, he executed several for the two churches of Assisi,[1] where he immediately preceded all the celebrated painters who assisted or contributed to the revival of art, without acquiring from this priority the slightest influence over those who came after him.

The expiring traditions, of which Giunta had made himself the apostle and protector, survived for some time the reform introduced by Giotto, who was the cause of

[1] A crucifix by Giunta was in the upper church of Assisi, bearing his name and the date of 1236. Another was in the lower church. Several other works of the same style, which are dispersed throughout central Italy, may be noticed: as for example, the mosaic in the cathedral of Spoleto, the half-effaced paintings in the church of San Piero in Grado, between Pisa and Leghorn, and some ancient pictures in the Academy of Siena.

their final extinction. But why should we distract our minds with the spectacle of this prolonged struggle, at the moment when Christian poetry, overflowing in every soul, is about to assume the new and progressive form of modern art, so laboriously brought to light during the middle ages?

CHAPTER II.

Commencement of the School of Siena—Guido—Diotisalvi—Duccio—Ambrogio and Pietro di Lorenzo—Simone Memmi.

At length, in the thirteenth century, schools of painting arose in Italy, each with its series of traditions, which were transmitted from one generation to another; and, notwithstanding the evidence that has been accumulated to prove that Florence itself was the cradle of art, a more recent and profound critic has decided the question of priority in favour of the republic of Siena, the political greatness of which extends over the whole of the thirteenth century, whilst that of Florence only commences with the fourteenth.

At the time when artists and historians employed themselves in collecting materials for a history of art, the city of the Virgin had already lost her riches and her liberty; the insalubrity of her marshes deterred the greater number of travellers from visiting her, and the laureate painters of the grand dukes of Tuscany had succeeded in consigning to oblivion even the names of the greater portion of the Sienese artists. The slight notice which Vasari deigns to take of them does not even excite a suspicion of the importance of certain of their works: this is the more inexcusable, when we consider that the ancient edifices of this despised republic were still standing, with their original decorations, and that, in

its authentic archives, the necessary dates, names, and indication of works might have been found, proving the existence of a Sienese school in the thirteenth century, and establishing the fact with a degree of certainty which does not exist for that of Florence before the epoch, when its real founder, Giotto, flourished.

The curious picture by Guido da Siena, which still exists in the church of the Domenicans, certainly a remarkable work for the time at which it was executed, bears the authentic date of 1221, and is contemporaneous with the cathedral; as are also the fountains and aqueducts which adorn the lower part of the city, now so deserted. It was then that Siena entered on an era of prosperity, which may be said to have been crowned by the victory of Montcaperti, gained over the Florentines in 1260. To this period also belong Bonamico, Parabuoi, and Diotisalvi; the latter illuminated the books of Cammerlengo, several of the bindings of which still remain;[1] and towards the end of the century Duccio appeared, whose large picture, which is in the cathedral, has been fortunately preserved: it was upon this he laboured for three years, with so much spirit, taste, and patience, that Rumohr does not hesitate to place it above all the monuments which belong to the Byzantino-Tuscan school,[2] without even excepting the Madonnas of Cimabue. The celebrated Ghiberti, the most ancient historian of art in Italy, barely makes men-

[1] They are preserved in the collection of the academy of the Belle Arti at Siena.

[2] It is thus that Rumohr characterises the period at which modern art had not entirely emancipated itself from the Byzantine trammels.

tion of the last; and it is not difficult to perceive that it is to Duccio he gives the preference,[1] although he does not attribute to him, like Vasari, the invention of those designs in chiaroscuro, which are so much admired on the pavement of the cathedral of Siena, and which certainly are not earlier than the first half of the thirteenth century. In the only work of his which remains to us, we see that he departed but little from traditional types, and that he paid more regard to sweetness than to dignity of expression; a feeling which he shared in common with the majority of the painters of this school, on whom his influence was perceptible during the whole of the following century.

Although the fortune of the Republic began from this time to decline, painting did not share the same fate. Not only is this the period at which painters organised themselves into a corporation, with statutes, which were ratified in 1355; but it is also that in which Simone Memmi flourished, as well as Ambrogio and Pietro di Lorenzo, who were in all probability brothers, and who adorned their country with a multitude of admirable works, which almost all existed in the time of Ghiberti. He speaks with an enthusiasm which is not usual to him, of a grand composition with which Ambrogio had covered the walls of a cloister, representing the life of a Christian missionary with all its vicissitudes and trials. A young man is there seen taking the religious habit—further on he joins his supplications to those of several

[1] He scarcely mentions Cimabue; and Cennino Cennini, who goes back as far as Giotto, does not mention him at all.

of the brotherhood to obtain permission to be sent into Asia, in order to convert the Saracens—then we have their departure—their appearance before the Sultan, who causes them to be tied to a post, and beaten with rods—the executioners fatigued and sweating from their exertions—the people listening to their predication, even after the order that they should be hung on a tree had been executed—further on the Sultan commands their heads to be cut off—then, after their decapitation, a tempest arises, accompanied with thunder, lightning, and an earthquake. Trees are seen, some bent, others broken, while the terrified spectators seek to cover themselves, some with their garments, others with their bucklers.[1]

In one of the halls of the Palazzo Pubblico may still be seen, although in a sad state of dilapidation, a very interesting work by the same artist, in which it appears to have been his intention to represent the contrast between town and country: on one side is the interior of Siena, with its edifices well defined, its streets and public places crowded with people, and enlivened with animated dances, in which figure young girls of elegant and graceful forms; on the other side, beyond the gate, we see well-cultivated fields, and men and women on horseback; and, although this portion of the picture may be rather bare, we are charmed to find in it one of the first attempts to paint fields, woods, and the various details of country life. As to the allegorical

[1] The description of this picture, imperfect in Vasari, is very accurately given by Rumohr, *Italienishe Forschungen*, 1 b. § 8.

paintings with which the other walls are covered, they were unintelligible to me; except, perhaps, the commanding figure of a man, whose imperial ornaments designate him to be either Charlemagne or one of his successors.

The only well-authenticated work which is known of Pietro di Lorenzo is found in the sacristy of the cathedral of Siena. His name is inscribed on it, with the date 1342. He has intended to represent some features in the life of St. John the Baptist; but there is so great a resemblance between his style and that of his brother Ambrogio, even in the minutest details, that, wherever the inscription is wanting, it is impossible to distinguish them.

Thus we cannot attribute exclusively either to one or other of the two brothers the great work in the Campo Santo at Pisa, representing the life led by the saints in the desert. Notwithstanding the want of perspective, and the incorrectness of the drawing, it is nevertheless a masterpiece of grace and simplicity. St. Paul is seen visited in his solitude by St. Anthony—the death of the former—the two lions excavating his grave —the temptations of St. Anthony—Christ appearing to console him—St. Hilary, who by the sign of the cross chases away a dragon which infested Dalmatia — St. Mary the Egyptian receiving the eucharist from the hands of the blessed Zosima—the touching history of the two friends, Onofrio and Panuza—the miraculous palm-tree, a bough of which flowered every month for their support—the well-known adventures of St. Marina —lastly, the different occupations of the monks, some

of whom plait mats of rushes, others listen to the word of God, while the remainder are absorbed in contemplation: in a word, all that could occupy the body or mind of these monkish saints in their solitude, is either represented or implied.

The same subject, on a smaller scale, by one or other of these two brothers, treated with a remarkable superiority of execution, is to be seen in the gallery of the Grand Duke at Florence; and it is also represented in another picture which I have seen at Pisa, and which bears all the character of a contemporaneous work.[1]

The lives of the saints of the desert was therefore one of the favourite subjects adopted by this school, and was borrowed from the purest portion of the Byzantine traditions. This predilection is explained by the veneration in which their memory was held, and, above all, by the admirable instinct which guided the simple painters of this early period in the choice of their subjects. Assuredly they were ignorant that the germs of poetry contained in the biographies of St. Jerome could only develope themselves and attain maturity through the intervention of painting, and it had never occurred to their minds to compare the use which the drama or sculpture might be able to make of them, with the results which they themselves were able to produce from the same sources. And yet they delighted in them as their natural element, and divined that this variety of expression and attitude, with the accompaniment of calm solitude and rural simplicity to be found in them,

[1] In the Casa Frosini. The proprietor wishes it to be considered a work of Giotto's.

could only be given by lines and colours, and that an existence so essentially poetical was not susceptible of any other form of delineation.

Simone Memmi, contemporary and fellow-countryman of the two Lorenzos, enjoys the great advantage over them of having been the friend of Petrarch, who makes honourable mention of him, not only in his sonnets but in his letters, in which he says that he has known two great painters, Giotto of Florence and Simone of Siena,[1] evidently considering this last as an artist quite independent of the other, and placing them both on an equality as to merit and reputation. Ghiberti, who had seen their works, and who considered the schools of Florence and Siena as distinct, speaks in high terms of Simone, but without adding a syllable to excite a suspicion that Giotto had been his master. Besides, in comparing their works, important differences may be detected between them, not only in the mechanical part, but also in the detail of the forms, and in the disposition and grouping of the figures. Moreover, in the pictures of the former the cheeks are generally fuller, and more rounded in their contour.

Simone Memmi was also no less happily inspired than his predecessors in the choice of his compositions, taken for the most part from the life of some popular saint; as the history of St. Domenic, which he painted in the Cappella degli Spagnuoli at Florence, and that of St. Ranieri, which he divided into several compartments, in the Campo Santo at Pisa. A touching circumstance is connected with

[1] *Duos ego novi Pictores egregios . . . . Joetum Florentinum civem, cujus inter modernos fama ingens est, et Simonem Senensem.*

this last-named work, which ought not to have been passed over in silence by historians on art: it is, that in 1356, the plague, which desolated Naples and Sicily, reached Pisa by way of Genoa, where it carried off more than three hundred victims a-day; and that the senate and people going in the dress of penitents, barefooted and weeping, to offer up prayers for mercy at the tomb of St. Ranieri, the plague ceased its ravages from that moment. Now, it is proved from authentic documents, that Simone Memmi was summoned by the Pisans immediately after this miraculous deliverance,[1] so that the painting which is seen in the Campo Santo may be considered more a work of piety than of art, or rather it is a magnificent *ex voto*, destined to immortalize the remembrance of a benefit conferred, and the gratitude excited by it.

All was mystery and poetry in the life of this holy personage. In a vision which he had in his youth, an eagle appeared to him carrying in its beak a lighted torch, and saying to him, *I come from Jerusalem to enlighten the nations.* His life had been filled with the most marvellous adventures; and at his death, which occurred the 17th of June, 1161, all the bells of the churches in Pisa tolled spontaneously; the Archbishop Villani, who had been stretched for two years on a sick

[1] Vasari says that Simone Memmi had finished the painting in the Cappella degli Spagnuoli, in Santa Maria Novella, when he was called to Pisa. Now, Guidalotti, the founder of this chapel, died in 1355, as is proved by the inscription on his sepulchral stone, which still exists. In his will he charged his brother, Domenico, to see that the paintings were completed.—V. Meccatti, *Notizie istoriche sul Cappellone degli Spagnuoli.* Fir. 1757, in 4to.

bed, was raised entirely healed, to officiate at his funeral, and at the moment when the *Gloria in excelsis* was suppressed, as is usual in the service for the dead, a choir of angels chanted it over the altar, while a spontaneous accompaniment burst from the organ; and such was the sweetness and harmony of this angelic concert, that the spectators imagined that the gates of heaven were opened to them.[1] This legend had been transmitted from mouth to mouth, and from one generation to another, for more than two centuries, when the principal events in the life of the saint to whom it referred were depicted on the walls of the Campo Santo, by an artist who was principally indebted for his success to his sympathy with those who employed his pencil.

With the exception of what relates to the plague, the grand composition in the Cappella degli Spagnuoli is more interesting in itself, both for the richness and variety of its details, for picturesque invention, and for the abundance and *naïveté* of poetical motives. It is singular that Ghiberti does not mention it, but it has been described at length by Vasari.

The two Lorenzos and Simone Memmi belong to the first half of the fourteenth century; and if we may judge from the number of artists, both national and foreign, whose names are inscribed in the archives of the town, or in the registers of the public assemblies, the second half of this century could not have been less fertile in

[1] This glorious legend is found in a manuscript, which contains the lives of the saints of Pisa, and which was shown to me in the library of the convent of St. Catherine.

painters than the first.[1] But this fertility was merely numerical; and at Siena, still more than at Florence, painting seems to have remained stationary until the beginning of the following century.

[1] In these registers we find painters from Perugia, Orvieto, Pistoja, and even Germany.—See Lanzi, *Storia pittor. Scuola Senese.*

CHAPTER III.

Cimabue—Giotto—Disappearance of the Byzantine Types—Stefano—Taddeo Gaddi—Review of the Progress of Art during this first Period.

I RETURN to the origin of the Florentine school, which, although it dates its rise half a century later than that of Siena, was destined to run a much longer career, and to attain to a higher state of perfection.

With the exception of Fidanza, who is mentioned in the archives of the chapter about the year 1224, there is no well-authenticated name of any artist belonging to this period, and but little is known with certainty of Andrea Tafi and Cimabue, notwithstanding all that has been attributed to them by Vasari and succeeding writers. The only point on which no doubt exists is, that they were formed under Greek masters, the former at Venice, where they decorated the basilica of St. Mark with mosaics, and the latter at Florence itself, to which place artists had been invited from Constantinople.

Two important authorities have contributed towards Cimabue being considered as the regenerator of art: Dante, in the well-known passage where he says that Cimabue believed himself to hold the sceptre of painting, but that now it had passed into the hands of Giotto;[1]

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[1] *Credette Cimabue nella pittura*
Tener lo campo ed ora ha Giotto il Grido.

and Fillippo Villani, in his history of the illustrious men of Florence, written at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The few works of Cimabue which still exist suffice, however, to give us an idea of the almost servile fidelity with which he thought it necessary to conform himself to the degenerate types of Byzantine art, only occasionally surpassing them in his manner of treating the accessories, in the clearer tone of the carnations, and in the rather more elevated character of the heads. All this might serve well enough to adorn the mummy in its case; but, instead of these worthless ornaments, it was necessary to burst the bands and utterly to destroy these types, alike devoid of form and life, and thus prelude the resurrection of a new art, which was as independent in its course as ancient art had been.

The great picture painted by Cimabue for the abbey of the Holy Trinity, which represents the Virgin seated on a throne, with the infant Jesus in her arms, is preserved in the gallery of the Belle Arti at Florence. If the dimensions were smaller, it might easily be mistaken for the work of a Greek artist, rather more happily inspired than usual, so closely does it resemble the miserable productions of this school! But we have no right to criticise with the same severity another painting by this artist, of still larger dimensions, which is to be seen in the church of Santa Maria Novella. Vasari relates, that when Charles of Anjou passed through Florence, he was taken to the house of Cimabue, who had not at that time shown his work to any one; and that the inhabitants of both sexes, taking advantage of the opportunity thus afforded them, flocked together in

such numbers, and with such demonstrations of joy, that this locality received, and has ever since retained, the name of *Borgo allegri* (Quarter of Joy); and that on the day when the painting was carried in solemn pomp to the church the people followed it in procession, amid the sound of trumpets and the acclamations of enthusiasm.[1]

This anecdote would be precious in the history of a people, even if it were without value in the history of art. The severe character of this composition, the charm of a new and improved tone of colour, the imposing dignity with which it is impressed, could not fail to strike the imagination; and this effect was greatly enhanced by the vastness of its dimensions, which exceeded anything that had hitherto been seen. In this respect there was a decided progress,—a progress which was also perceptible in the figure of the child, and above all in the heads of the angels, which are treated with peculiar predilection, and even with happy effect; but in the principal subject the artist has not had courage to shake off the yoke, and it is easy to perceive how his genius was enthralled and his pencil captivated by the Byzantine models.

We search in vain for the frescos he executed at Florence and Pisa, and of which the subject was the history of St. Francis, and that of St. Agnes,—both so marvellously adapted to the legitimate aim of Christian art. As to those with which it is pretended that he covered the walls of the upper church at Assisi, it is

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Cimabue.*

without the slightest foundation that Vasari has attributed them to him.[1]

The above-named historian, who borrows this anecdote from Ghiberti, relates that one day Cimabue perceived a shepherd boy, who, while tending his flock, amused himself by sketching a sheep; this shepherd was Giotto, who was destined to work so great a revolution in painting. His mission of regenerator was not confined exclusively to the Florentine school: invited successively by all the principal cities of Italy, he everywhere set the example of contempt for the Byzantine traditions, unmindful of the germs of excellence which certain of them might contain, and respecting neither the costume nor even the conventional arrangement which had always been adopted in the old Christian representations. This was precisely the period when modern architecture freed itself from the classic yoke, and when, in consequence of a still more important emancipation, the empire of the vulgar idiom became universally recognised. As the revolution effected by Giotto belongs to this great movement of independence, I shall not, with Rumohr, reproach him of having given to Art an almost pagan direction, and invested her with a purely human character; neither shall I attribute his innovations to a certain indifference for the dignity of the objects he had to represent. The testimony of Ghiberti, who was more competent than any one to appreciate him, from the period in which he wrote, is no less energetic than decisive: he says that Giotto changed art *de fond en comble*, transforming it from

[1] Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, t. i. § 8.

Greek into Latin.[1] Cennino makes use of precisely the same language, only he confines his observations to the change in the technicalities; Ghiberti to the choice of the subjects, and the manner of treating them. It does not appear that, in separating himself thus boldly from received models, Giotto scandalized the grave personages of his time, since he reckoned Petrarch among his admirers, who in his will bequeathed, as the most worthy offering to the Signor of Padua, a Madonna by Giotto, of "which the uninitiated, indeed," he says, "do not comprehend the beauty, but before which the artist stands in mute astonishment;"[2] Boccaccio, who says that Nature produces nothing that Giotto does not imitate, even to illusion;[3] Dante, whose words are no less significant than precise;[4] and Giovanni Villani, who places him above all other painters, in still more express terms.[5]

A novel of Sacchetti's, in which Giotto figures as a pleasant and joyous personage, abounding in happy repartees, throws much light on the personal character of this artist. One day, returning with his friends from the *fête* of S. Gallo, they entered the church of S. Marco, in which was a picture of a Holy Family, and Giotto, being asked why the Virgin was always represented with

[1] *Lasciò la rossezza de' Greci, rimutò l'arte del dipignere di Greco in Latino, e ridusse al moderno . . . . .*

[2] *Quia ego nihil aliud habeo dignum te, mitto tabulam meam beatæ Virginis, operis Jocti pictoris egregii . . . . in cujus pulchritudinem ignorantes non intelligunt, magistri autem artis stupent, etc.* — Vasari, *Vita di Giotto.*

[3] Decam. Giorn. 6, Nov. 5.

[4] Credette Cimabue, etc.

[5] *E quegli che più trasse ogni figura ed atti al naturale.*—Lib. ii. c. 12.

an expression of melancholy, he successfully vindicated this treatment of the subject. All his replies denote a clear and calm intellect, a penetrating and observant mind, by no means disposed to disdain the realities of life. His little poem against voluntary poverty is stamped with the same impress;[1] so that, in comparing these peculiarities with the works themselves which remain to us, a tolerably just idea may be formed of the kind of mission that Giotto was charged to accomplish.

Of the innumerable paintings which he left behind him in the principal cities of Italy, only a few fragments now remain that can be considered authentic. All the works he executed at Avignon, Milan, Verona, Ferrara, Urbino, Ravenna, Lucca, and Gaeta, have either been involved in the ruin of the edifices that contained them, or have disappeared to make room for the more elegant works of succeeding centuries. But at Padua, in the small chapel of the *Arena*, built in 1303, may still be admired the principal scenes in the life of Jesus Christ, which Giotto painted three years later; assisted, it is said, by the counsels of Dante. It is, I believe, the only subject in which this artist did not permit himself to deviate in the slightest degree from the traditional arrangement of the figures; for example, the Transfiguration is there represented after the manner of the ancient mosaics, a mode of treatment that was followed at a later period by Raphael himself.

At Assisi, that inexhaustible mine of the happiest

[1] This poem has been transcribed by Rumohr from the original manuscript, which is at Florence. — Vide *Italienische Forschungen*, t. i. § 9.

inspirations of art, we may still see, as well as the darkness of the locality permits, the paintings with which he covered the arch above the tomb of St. Francis. The arrangement of the groups is excellent, and the warm tints, which had lately been introduced as a happy innovation, prevail in them. As to the paintings in the upper church, which are also attributed to him, they bear so slight a resemblance to all his known works, and betray such gross ignorance of the proportions of the human form, that Vasari's blunder in this respect[1] appears inconceivable.

In a letter addressed by Robert, king of Naples, to his eldest son, Charles of Calabria, who was then at Florence, he desires him to send Giotto, at whatever cost, to paint the ceiling of the choir in the church of Santa Chiara in that city. These paintings have suffered less than those he executed elsewhere, and two amongst them are still in perfect preservation:[2] they represent the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and that of Marriage; in the first, the modest air of the candidates as they are conducted before the Pope, together with the fervour of those who pray and sing, are so admirably given; in the second, the attitudes and airs of the heads in the female

[1] Several of the figures are thirteen times the length of the head (see Rumohr, *loc. cit.*). He thinks he recognises in several places the hand of Spinello d'Arezzo, and that of his son, Parri di Spinello.

[2] The paintings here described are not in S. Chiara, but in the little church of the Incoronata. See Kugler's *Handbook of Italian Painting.*

Valery tells us that King Robert, on the advice of Boccaccio, employed Giotto to cover the interior of S. Chiara with frescos; but that these paintings, with the exception of a Madonna in one of the side-chapels, disappeared during the Spanish rule in Naples.—*Translator's note.*

See also Murray's *Handbook of South Italy*, p. 124.

figures are so happily varied; that they sufficiently explain the enthusiasm of his contemporaries for the life-like productions of his pencil.

The painting which he executed at Rome for the Church of St. Peter no longer exists entire, and the fragments which have been preserved of it in the sacristy cannot fail to make us regret its loss. These fragments represent Jesus Christ, the Virgin, the Apostles, and the decapitation of St. Paul: the whole treated with a grandeur of style which has led Rumohr to suspect that the susceptible imagination of Giotto was unable to resist the impression which the ancient mosaics of the Christian basilicas must have produced upon him.

Giotto was more at his ease in his grand composition in the Campo Santo at Pisa, and consequently the style is more independent and more analogous to his natural tendencies; but the subject is not happily chosen,—first, because the book of Job is in itself a perfect poem, the beauty of which is independent of any addition from art; and, secondly, because this history is a kind of inward drama, in which all the scenes are represented as passing within the mind of a holy man whom God tries for his greater sanctification: hence painting, dependent for its effect on lines and colours, is unequal to give all the details and imperceptible gradations which properly belong to a scene, the dramatic interest of which is of so elevated a nature. The history of Job, in the Campo Santo at Pisa, has sustained more injury from time than any of the adjoining paintings.

Florence possesses the most authentic picture by Giotto which exists, the only one on which he has in-

scribed his name. It is in the church of Santa Croce, and represents the coronation of the Virgin,—that mystic scene enacted between heaven and earth, and which, as it does not admit of being treated with facility by either poetry or sculpture, seems to belong in a more especial manner to painting. All the innovations which Giotto had introduced into his other works seem to be embodied in this. The infant Christ is no longer the same, either in character or in costume; the primitive type, still discernible in Duccio and Cimabue, has totally disappeared; the angels in the four compartments are charming, both as regards variety and grace; but he has repudiated the costume adopted by his predecessors, and in order to render the difference more striking he has placed instruments of music in their hands. The decided progress[1] indicated by this picture, consists principally in the technical part, and in the colouring, which is much clearer and more transparent than it had hitherto been in the Florentine school, and especially in that of Siena, where the shadows were more leaden in their tone, and the lights of a yellower hue.

If it is allowable to hazard some conjectures as to the subject which he treated with the greatest predilection as a Christian artist, I think it was probably the life of St.

[1] It is important not to lose sight of the distinction which I have drawn between the positive and negative merit of Giotto, which consists in the casting aside of certain types, superior in many respects to those which he has himself substituted for them, but incompatible with the high destinies which awaited modern Christian art. This incompatibility appears entirely to have escaped Rumohr, and, therefore, was not likely to have been noticed by the writers that preceded him in researches of this nature.

Francis of Assisi, which, according to Vasari, was the subject of his labours at Assisi itself, at the Franciscan convents of Verona, Ravenna, and Rimini, at Florence, in a chapel in Santa Croce, and even on the wardrobes of the sacristy. It was again that mysterious instinct of art, of which we have spoken elsewhere, which guided him in his choice. No biography of any martyr or saint of the desert was so well calculated as that of St. Francis for the development of the kind of merit to which painting especially aspires, namely, the poetic expression of the profound affections of the soul. In this perfect and marvellous life, few external actions or dramatic episodes are to be found; the virtues that abound in it are, on the contrary, of a very humble and peaceful character, but nevertheless they have the effect of illuminating the countenances of those who severely practise them with a kind of celestial radiance. Humility with its modest mien, and love with its sublime ecstasies, are only capable of being represented in a satisfactory manner by painting. Thus, during three consecutive centuries, that is to say, so long as art retained its Christian character, artists have employed their pencil on this magnificent subject, without our being able to say that they have ever exhausted it; and we shall see at a later period a school, more especially nourished by these local inspirations, suddenly rise into excellence in the neighbourhood of the holy mountain where the body of St. Francis reposes.[1]

[1] I allude to the Umbrian School, to which belong Perugino and his disciple Raphael.

Another subject, which appears to have been frequently treated by Giotto, is Christ on the Cross; at least we are led to this belief from the number of crucifixes attributed to him in Italy, and which, if they are not all executed by the same hand, have undoubtedly been painted after one common type, which was not that of the Byzantine school. We have already said how completely this last type had degenerated, so as no longer to express anything beyond mere physical suffering. The weakness of the body bent on one side, the distortion of the features, the livid colour of the flesh, the streams of blood which flowed from each of the wounds, had all transformed an object of adoration into an object of disgust, but little in harmony with the taste of the Christians of the West, whose imagination was purer, and required more to satisfy it than that of the Greeks. It was Giotto again who commenced the reform on this point, and it is a proof that he was influenced by other feelings than those which merely related to the practice of his art, that, in a Crucifixion which he painted for the church of the Annunziate at Gaeta, he introduced himself kneeling at the foot of the cross.

The number of Giotto's disciples,[1] who swarmed in Tuscany and in the rest of Italy until the end of the fourteenth century, almost exceeds belief. To enable us to form any idea of it, we must read in the archives of the cathedral of Florence the multitude of obscure names which are mingled with those of Taddeo Gaddi and Orcagna. This increase in the number of artists neces-

[1] His death happened in 1336, that of Simone Memmi in 1344.

sarily produced the multiplication of works of art, and hence it is that the edifices built in the course of this half century have been decorated with paintings, all of which at first sight appear to resemble each other; hundreds of figures present the same general character in the heads, the eyes are long and narrow, nearly meeting at the nose, and marked by two nearly parallel lines. All these defects are observable, although in a less degree in Giotto himself, and could not be easily avoided by his immediate disciples, who, in consequence of their blind veneration for their master, fell into a careless and insipid imitation, which we might be tempted to mistake for a decadence. But this apparent languor was the necessary consequence of the change which had just taken place; the Byzantine types had been finally abandoned, and no new type had been definitively substituted for them: hence arose those uncertain efforts, which could have no end until the domain of Christian Art, having remained desert for a time, should be repeopled with models worthy of the high destinies which awaited it.

The revolution effected by Giotto did not meet with opposition in Florence itself, but it was otherwise in the neighbouring and rival republics, and particularly at Siena[1] and Arezzo. In this last city dwelt an old painter, a fanatical worshipper of the Byzantine images, to the imitation of which he had conscientiously devoted his long and laborious life. When Farinata degli Uberti

[1] Ugolino da Siena would never depart from the style of Cimabue. —Vasari, *Vita di Stefano*.

saved Florence from the vengeance of the Ghibelline faction,[1] Margaritone (such was the name of the artist) believed that he had bestowed upon him a recompense of no small value when he sent him a large crucifix, which he had just painted in the Greek manner. Finding, however, his works disdained, the times changed, and every honour reserved for painters of the new school, the poor old man died of disgust and mortification.[2]

At Rome, the reform in art was by no means so decisive and victorious as the success which Giotto had obtained there seemed to promise. His disciple Cavallini always remained captivated by the Byzantine style, and the violence he did to his own taste, in order to conform it to that of his master, only produced a mixture of both. His piety was so fervent that he was almost regarded as a saint, and it was repugnant to him to disavow, as an artist, an image of the Virgin or of Christ, before which he had often prostrated himself as a sinner.[3]

It has been asserted, and frequently repeated without due examination, that art remained stationary during the half century which followed the death of Giotto, and that the best painters had no other claim to renown than that of being his imitators; nevertheless it appears to me

[1] He persuaded the deputies of the Guelf confederation that the destruction of Florence was not necessary for the security of the other cities.

[2] *Margaritone morì infastidito d'esser tanto vivuto vedendo variata l'età e gli onori negli artifici nuovi.*—Vasari, *Vita di Margaritone.*

[3] It was a crucifix of Cavallini which spoke to Santa Brigida in the church of San Paolo fuori le Mure (1370).

We may see in Agincourt, pl. 125, to what a degree Cavallini knew how to give an expression of piety to his personages and groups.

that Stefano, Taddeo Gaddi, Giottino, and Andrea Orcagna, have left works sufficiently original to entitle them to higher praise.

Stefano is the first who endeavoured to represent the nude under the folds of the draperies, and who attempted with some boldness foreshortening in the arms and legs of his figures. His paintings in fresco, in the cloisters of Santo Spirito at Florence, excited universal admiration, on account of the illusion produced by the combination and proportion of the lines of architecture. As he had already attained some fame in the lifetime of Giotto, he was employed to continue several of his works after his death. The church of St. Francis at Assisi,[1] and that of St. Peter at Rome, received the tribute of his pencil. Matteo Visconti sent for him to Milan, where Giotto had already worked; but death did not allow his pupil time to complete the beautiful works which he had begun there.

Taddeo Gaddi, the favourite pupil of Giotto, who had held him at the baptismal font, followed with greater fidelity than Stefano in the steps of his master, never aspiring to enlarge on his manner, and being satisfied with occasionally surpassing him in the freshness and vivacity of his colouring. Such is the judgment passed on him by Vasari; but in this we are not inclined to agree without scrutiny, when we read the very different testimony which Ghiberti has borne to the same painter, in speaking of a picture which existed in his time in the

[1] The paintings of Stefano in the church of Assisi, although unfinished, were those which Vasari admired the most.

church of the Servites, and which he considered one of the finest he had ever seen.

A work by this artist, equally remarkable for its beauty and its extent, the importance of which has been allowed by Vasari, may still be seen in a chapel in Santa Croce. It is the representation of a legend taken from the history of the holy Virgin. In the upper compartment is seen a shepherd, who appears to be playing on his flute whilst his sheep are drinking at a neighbouring spring. In the lower compartment St. Anna receives St. Joachim on his return, with an air of touching cordiality. On one side is the birth of the Virgin, and the caresses of which she is the object are admirably expressed: on the other is her marriage, in which it is impossible not to admire the *naïveté* and grace, united to movement and variety, in the countenances.

Taddeo Gaddi had also his pious predilection for one particular saint over all the rest. St. Jerome was to him an object of especial devotion; he chose him for protector of his family, and he painted him in the dress of a cardinal in the church of Santa Maria Novella. The same subject has been the favourite theme of a great number of later painters, and the picturesque *motives* which it presented occasioned its being frequently chosen, even long after the religious sentiment had very much lost its empire over the imagination of the painter.

Another interesting particular in the life of Taddeo is the friendly intercourse which he maintained until his death with Giovanni da Melano and Giacomo di Casentino, who often united their works to his, and to whom he bequeathed his two sons, to be instructed by Giovanni

da Melano in the study of art, and by Giacomo di Casentino in the practice of Christian virtues.[1]

This Giovanni da Melano is an almost unknown personage in the history of painting; nevertheless, there exist some works by him which are superior to all the productions of this century in the charm of the style, and, above all, in the remarkable improvement of the forms. It is sufficient to see his adoration of the Magi in the church of Assisi to differ from Vasari in opinion, who hardly deigns to notice it, and still more from Ghiberto, who does not mention it at all. This picture forms, as it were, a prelude to the marvels of the Umbrian school, and Rumohr thinks that Raphael himself may have been indirectly influenced by it.[2]

Giottino was also a progressive artist, although his name seems to imply that in talent he was the inferior of Giotto. This last had already been surpassed by Taddeo Gaddi in the graceful treatment of the figures; but he had always retained the palm for design, character, and for all that requires earnestness of expression. Giottino, in each of these respects, as well as in the harmony of his colouring,[3] was far in advance of all his predecessors, and he understood better than any one of them to turn the representation of the human figure to

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Taddeo Gaddi.*

[2] It is to Rumohr that the re-establishment of the fame of Giov: da Melano is due. He speaks of another picture by him, which bears the date of 1365; and it would seem, from the quality of the work, that the author had some connexion with the contemporaneous school of the Lower Rhine. I saw in the church of the Ognissanti at Florence two figures of saints by him, which struck me still more.

[3] *L'unione dei colori era il proprio di questo Pittore.*—Vasari.

the best advantage, by felicitous movements of the head and limbs. We may form a judgment of him from his fine frescos in the church of Santa Croce, which are happily uninjured, and which fully justify the praise that Ghiberti and Vasari have agreed in giving them. They represent the history of Constantine and the miracles of St. Sylvester. This is the only one among all the works of the fourteenth century which gives us some slight idea of the manner afterwards adopted by Masaccio in the representation of this kind of subject.

It may be said that no artist of this school cultivated painting with so much enthusiasm and disinterestedness as Giottino, a disinterestedness which reduced him to extreme poverty, of which he never complained. Solitude had always irresistible charms for him; and this taste having increased his natural disposition to melancholy, he died of consumption almost in the flower of his age.

Only three artists of any importance remain to be noticed, before we close the history of this first period of the Florentine school: Agnolo Gaddi, the son of Taddeo; Antonio the Venetian, known by his fine fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa; and Andrea Orcagna, the most celebrated of them all as a painter, sculptor, and architect, on account of the number and beauty of his works.

Agnolo Gaddi did not possess his father's passion for art, as the mediocrity of his numerous works, still to be seen in the church of Santa Croce, and elsewhere, sufficiently proves. Incapable of resisting the temptation of enriching himself by commerce, he lived for some time

on the reputation he had gained from his first picture, representing the resurrection of Lazarus, until the negligence and incorrectness of his drawing made his decline in art manifest. Nevertheless, I am unwilling to pass over in silence the chapel of the Holy Virgin, in the cathedral at Prato, where he has painted in fresco, in thirteen compartments, not only her history from her birth to her assumption, but the legend relating to her girdle, which she let fall in ascending to heaven, and which, from the hands of St. Thomas, passed into those of an inhabitant of Prato, who married at the end of the first crusade the daughter of a Greek priest, with whom this treasure was deposited. This painting is certainly not a chef-d'œuvre; and it has been too unskilfully retouched for us to be under any illusion regarding its value as a work of art. But when I heard this legend related for the first time, it appeared to me that the picture reflected a portion of the poetry it contains. This love beyond the sea, blended with the chivalrous adventures of a crusade—this precious relic, given in dowry to a poor girl—the devotion of the young spouses for this revered pledge of their happiness—their clandestine departure—their prosperous voyage, accompanied by dolphins, who form their escort on the surface of the water — their arrival at Prato, the repeated miracles, which, together with a mortal malady, draw at length from the lips of the dying man a public declaration, in consequence of which the holy girdle was deposited in the cathedral,—all this mixture of romantic passion and naive piety had effaced for me the technical imperfec-

tions which would probably have struck a more critical observer.

Antonio the Venetian, the scholar of Agnolo Gaddi, proved himself very superior to his master in a grand composition, which he executed in the Campo Santo at Pisa, and which is regarded as the most perfect work in this museum of Christian painting. He there completed the legend of San Ranieri, commenced by Simone Memmi in commemoration of an interesting circumstance, to which we have already alluded. Unfortunately he was induced, from reading Dioscorides, to give himself up to the study of medical plants, and his genius, which promised wonders, was irrevocably lost to art.[1]

Andrea Orcagna was the Michael Angelo of his age: like him, he cultivated with great success sculpture, architecture, and painting; like him, he composed sonnets, and was a passionate admirer of Dante, on whose poem also he employed his pencil. In a word, it was Orcagna who closed the period begun by Giotto, and who appears to have opened a new era, not only for painting, but also for sculpture and architecture.

Two important works by Orcagna have been preserved, the one in the Campo Santo at Pisa, the other in a chapel of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. The first represents the Triumph of Death, the Universal Judgment, and Hell, which he had not time to complete. The whole of this composition bears the impress of that mystical terrorism which prevails in the first part of the

[1] He died of the plague in 1384.

Divine Comedy, and I felt no surprise to see mass for the dead celebrated there, rather than elsewhere, on the day after the festival of All Saints. But this painting is not, as is generally supposed, the representation of the nine circles of hell, such as they are described by Dante in his incomparable poem. The painter has derived his inspiration from the genius of the poet, but he has developed the precious germs which he borrowed from him according to his own fancy; and I think that, with the exception of the head of Lucifer crushing a sinner in each of his three jaws, not one original conception has been literally reproduced by his pencil. At all events, this supposed imitation is only found in the Hell—and the Triumph of Death belongs exclusively to Orcagna, both for invention and execution; it is incontestably the most important portion of the work, and that which supposes the grandest ideas and the richest imagination in the mind of the painter.

But it is especially in the Cappella Strozzi at Florence that the grace, energy, and fertility of his pencil, may be admired. Here, again, is seen hell divided into circles, as in the Campo Santo at Pisa; but with the exception of the plan and distribution of the parts, all the original work has disappeared under the bungling restoration that has been attempted. Happily, the remainder of the work has escaped the same destructive process, especially the charming picture which is over the altar, and bears the date of 1357, at which period Andrea was under thirty years of age.[1] It contains certain

[1] He died in 1389, at the age of sixty.—Vasari.

heads, which have an intensity of expression, to which no painter before him had approached. In the fresco representing the last judgment, there are among the elect, female figures of so celestial a beauty, and the foretaste of eternal felicity is so finely expressed in their countenances, that we could almost imagine that the Umbrian school had secretly borrowed some of his types.

It is of importance to notice the influence which the poem of Dante now began to exercise over the imagination of artists, and through their instrumentality over that of the people. The example set by Orcagna was imitated in several of the towns of Italy, and the Nine Circles of Hell were represented in San Petronio at Bologna; at Tolentino; in an abbey in Friouli; at Volterra, &c.[1] It required scarcely half a century for the Divine Comedy to take its rank among the popular legends, and among the highest productions of human genius, thus forming as it were the link between them. In it was found a complete system of ideal creations, which could not fail to assist art in its flight towards the higher regions. The stars of science and holiness who had appeared in Italy, St. Francis, St. Dominic, and St. Thomas, were in it the objects of an enthusiasm which had never before been so deeply felt, or so poetically expressed. Here was a new source of inspiration for the painter; and it is undoubtedly in consequence of this influence, so manifest in the school of Orcagna,

[1] Taddeo Bartolo of Siena, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, painted the Hell in the cloister of the Olivetani at Volterra; he contrived to retain his originality even whilst imitating Dante.—Vasari, *Vita di Taddeo Bartolo.*

that Traini, the best of his disciples, composed the magnificent picture which is in the church of Sta. Catherina at Pisa, representing St. Thomas treading under foot the vanquished heresies, and receiving from Christ the rays of the divine light; which after having been concentrated in the angelic doctor, as in a focus, reflect themselves on the crowd of his auditors, among whom may be remarked monks, doctors, bishops, cardinals, and even popes.

We will now recapitulate the progress of painting, and the principal features which characterised it during the period we have just surveyed.

In the first place, the Byzantine trammels have been broken through, and, as if to render all return to these miserable traditions impossible, art has derived its principal nourishment from legends comparatively modern, and exclusively in favour with the Christians of the West. The Crusades have commenced, and have had the effect of completely exposing the imbecility and baseness of the Greeks; and so great has been the retrospective effect of this antipathy between the two people, that the fathers of the Greek Church have rarely been united to the fathers of the Latin Church in religious representations. St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Ambrose, have been placed immediately after the four evangelists; subsequently appears St. Francis and his sanctuary of Assisi, the centre of inspirations and pilgrimages during the whole of the fourteenth century: there all artists of renown have prostrated themselves in succession, and have left on the walls of the sanctuary the pious tribute of their pencil. The innumerable convents of the Franciscans have mul-

tiplied, to an infinite extent, the representations of the same subject, with which painters, monks, and people, have at last become as familiar as with the Passion of Jesus Christ itself.

If the history of St. Dominic has been less popular, it is owing to the original difference which exists in the two institutions, and which could not escape that infallible instinct which guided the artists in the choice of their subjects. The order of the Dominicans had been expressly founded with a view to action, and that of the Franciscans with a view to contemplation, which was much more in accordance with the end and the means of painting.

The taste for dramatic subjects has not as yet showed itself. Notwithstanding the example given by the artists who had painted the Calendar of the Emperor Basil, no use has yet been made of the materials of art contained in the acts of the martyrs,—an inexhaustible collection of germs, full of life, but less in harmony than mystical subjects with the calm and majestic simplicity of a period which may justly be termed primitive. Other times brought with them different subjects and new inspirations. Important improvements have been introduced in the technical processes, in the composition of the colours, in the design of the figures, in the connexion of the groups, in lineal perspective, and even in expression, which has been successfully rendered more graceful and more varied.

The progress of every kind made by the Florentine school has been advantageous to the other cities of Italy, who have either invited Florentine artists, or have sent

disciples to them. This interchange was not discontinued after Giotto's time; and we see issue from the studio of the Gaddi family alone, an Antonio of Venice, another Antonio of Ferrara, and a Stefano of Verona. On the other hand, the route which conducted to St. Peter's at Rome is much too frequented to permit communications ever to slacken in that direction. Naples is not yet awakened: but Naples is a wreck of Byzantine civilization, which a handful of Norman adventurers found it easy to conquer, but not to regenerate.

As to the objects on which art has been employed, they have been exclusively Christian, and may all be found in the litanies, which were at this time the favourite formularies of popular devotion. The artist who felt conscious of his high vocation considered himself as the auxiliary of the preacher, and in the constant struggle that man has to sustain against his evil inclinations, he always took the side of virtue. This is not only proved by the deeply religious impress with which the monuments still existing are stamped, but I find a more direct proof of it in these words of Buffalmacco, one of the scholars of Giotto:—"We painters occupy ourselves entirely in tracing saints on the walls and on the altars, in order that by this means men, to the great despite of the demons, may be more drawn to virtue and piety."[1]

It was the same spirit of mutual edification which presided over the foundation of the confraternity of

[1] *Non attendiamo mai ad altro che a far santi e sante per le mura e per le tavole, ed a far perciò con dispetto dei demonj gli uomini più divoti e migliori.*—Vasari, *Vita di Buffalmacco.*

painters established in the year 1350, under the protection of St. Luke. They held their periodical meetings, not to communicate to each other discoveries, or to deliberate on the adoption of new methods, but simply to offer up thanks and praises to God. (*Per rendere lode e grazie a Dio.*)

Amid these pious pre-occupations, the studio of the painter became as it were transformed into an oratory; and it was the same thing with the sculptor, musician, and poet, at this epoch of marvellous unity, when every kind of inspiration sprang from the same source, and flowed instinctively towards the same end: from thence resulted also, an intimate sympathy between the artists and the people, which manifested itself either with *éclat*, as in the Madonna of Cimabue, or in a manner still more touching, as when the painter Barna was killed by a fall in the church of San Gimignano, and the inhabitants of the city came daily to suspend epitaphs in Latin or Italian over his tomb.[1]

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Barna.*

CHAPTER IV.

Christian Art loses its Unity—Naturalism of Paolo Uccello, and of several Artists who succeeded him, up to the time of Masaccio—Influence of the Sculptures of Ghiberti—Painting is invaded by Paganism.

The second period of the Florentine school will not display either the same unity of purpose, or the same purity in the elements. Two distinct tendencies, the antagonism of which becomes more and more decided, will strive for the mastery over the imagination of the artist and the domain of art. It will be our province to note the reappearance of paganism, together with symptoms of a defection as flagrant in the painters as in the sculptors, architects, and poets. This germ of decadence will develope itself slowly and almost imperceptibly, whilst in other respects painting will rapidly advance towards perfection. It is, therefore, important not to lose sight of this twofold development, which will proceed simultaneously in an inverse ratio, and which will serve better than any theory to throw light on those important problems we shall have to solve hereafter.

Even in what constitutes the true progress of painting it is necessary to distinguish two special elements, the culture and progressive perfection of which appear to have been more particularly in harmony with the Flo-

rentine genius. No other Italian school is so rich in great masters of design, but its superiority in the other parts of painting may fairly be contested. Design itself —at least that of the human form—may be divided into two branches, one of which consists in the proportion of the members; the other, in what may be termed the spirit of form. All these distinctions are absolutely necessary for a comparative appreciation of the different schools, and the artists which belong to each of them.

Paolo Uccello, with whom we shall commence the history of the second period, signalised its opening by several important discoveries, with which Stefano had been already in some degree acquainted, although the regular application of them had never occurred to him. I allude to lineal perspective, the study and practice of which became a sort of passion with Paolo Uccello, whose natural taste for pursuits of this nature was stimulated by his conversations with the learned Manetti, who translated Euclid for him.[1] He shut himself up for whole weeks in his studio, cheerfully supporting the privations of poverty and solitude in order to have the satisfaction of overcoming the difficulties of his art. In vain did the celebrated Donatello often remonstrate with him, and say, "My good Paolo, your perspective makes you neglect the certain for the uncertain." In vain did his wife in the long winter nights, moved by tenderness or compassion, often rouse herself from her slumbers and entreat him to put aside his work till the morrow.

[1] Giannozzi Manetti was the greatest Hellenist of his time. He was charged by the republic to explain the ethics of Aristotle.—*Tirab. Storia della Letter.* lib. iii. ch. 2, § 4.

The enthusiastic artist only replied, "Anima mia! if you could but understand the delights of perspective!" And she could never draw from him any other answer.[1]

He was so exclusive in his enthusiasm for perspective that he neglected every other part of his art. Vasari tells us, that if he had bestowed equal pains upon drawing the human figure, he would have been the greatest painter after Giotto. This, however, is an absurd exaggeration, for Paolo Uccello was not only wanting in correctness and elegance of design, but possessed little poetry in his compositions, and was altogether devoid of the organ of colour. It is on this account that he almost always painted in grey tints, as if it were his object to distract the spectator as little as possible from the admiration which the illusion of lineal perspective was intended to produce. The greater number of his paintings are either destroyed, or so miserably retouched that they can no longer be recognised; and the only works of his which can now afford us any pleasure are two or three fragments of his great composition in the cloister of Sta. Maria Novella, where we may admire the construction of the ark before the flood—a subject equally adapted to his geometrical talent for tracing and combining lines, and his taste for the representation of animals. One of the best preserved of his works is the painting on the walls of the cathedral of Florence, above the tomb of Sir John Hawkwood, the famous English condottiere, in which he has represented that warrior on horseback. Four artists, whose portraits he possessed, held the highest

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Paolo Uccello.*

place in his esteem: they were Giotto, Brunnelleschi, Donatello, and himself. To these he added the portrait of Manetti, out of gratitude for his lessons in geometrical perspective.[1]

Although no trace remains of the works executed by Paolo Uccello at S. Miniato, near Florence, I shall mention them on account of Vasari's positive testimony with regard to the absurd combination of the colours in the different parts of the picture: the landscapes which formed the background were bright blue, while the towns were painted red; and in the edifices, the author, guided only by his caprice, did not even trouble himself to imitate the colour of the stone.[2] The subject represented by him in the cloister was the same as that which was so often repeated by the brothers Lorenzo of Siena. I allude to the life of the Saints of the Desert, which I shall not henceforth have occasion to notice as the favourite theme either of any school or of any artist.

Paolo decorated with paintings of animals the interior of the palace of the Medici; and the simple mention of this family, whose patronage exercised so decisive an influence on the arts, announces to us that we are about to enter upon a new epoch, in which the patrons of art required the painter to employ his pencil on other than religious subjects. Amongst those who were thus willing to devote their pencil to a kind of domestic service may be mentioned a certain Dello, who acquired great repu-

[1] Paolo Uccello died in 1423, at the age of eighty-three.

[2] *Fece incampi azzuri, le città di color rosso, gli edifici variati secondo che gli parve.*—Vasari.

tation at the court of the King of Spain,[1] and who first brought those mythological subjects into fashion, for which a taste had been re-awakened by the erudition of the preceding century. It was at this time an universal custom among the rich families of Florence to have large coffin-shaped chests, decorated with elegant paintings, in which were preserved whatever valuables the family possessed. These chests were usually painted on every side, generally with subjects from profane history, the battle, the chase, amorous adventures, and sometimes the Metamorphoses of Ovid were represented on them. From his constant practice in this kind of decoration, Dello attained a degree of excellence which rendered all competition impossible so long as a demand for small and graceful subjects existed, and the incurable infatuation of the public for this venal and second-rate art was a temptation which even painters of a higher order were not always able to resist.

Notwithstanding the limited extent of this new field which was just opened to painting, more than one danger was to be found in it. In the first place, paganism, introduced as it were clandestinely, and merely as an accessory, into the domain of art, took root there, awaiting the time when education, already in a very advanced state, should have rendered the minds of the people indifferent to those emotions which Christian art had hitherto excited. The very facility of this *genre* painting presented another danger, and one which there was reason to fear that the less enthusiastic artists would be little inclined to resist.

[1] The painter Starnina had preceded him there about the year 1400.—Vasari, *Vita di Starnina.* [2] Vasari, *Vita di Dello.*

We thus see painting become subservient to all the profane tendencies of the period; to its classical pedantry, luxury, and frivolity; but above all, to that patrician vanity, which, by continually multiplying the number of portraits in religious pictures, became at last the means of introducing naturalism, that great element of decadence, into the domain of art: the fatal progress of which, continued at the expense of the poetic element, will be only too clearly perceived in the history of the several painters who will subsequently occupy our attention.

The portrait had taken its legitimate place in Christian art immediately after its revival; and the success with which Giotto had reproduced the features of Dante, Brunetto Latini, and Corso Donati, had not been his least title to the celebrity he enjoyed during his life. But he never mingled the great men, his contemporaries, with the revered personages of the Old and New Testament; and when he introduced his own portrait into a picture which he painted for the church of Gaeta, it was in the attitude of prayer and adoration. When his pupil, Capanna, painted that of Charles, duke of Calabria, he represented him humbly kneeling before the holy Virgin;[1] and this mode of composition, at once simple and pious, and of which he was probably not the inventor, was soon introduced into almost all the schools of Italy. Other combinations were, however, not excluded; for example, the Adoration of the Magi and of the Shepherds, in which the introduction of real person-

[1] This picture was in one of the rooms of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence.—Vasari, *Vita di Michelozzo.*

ages, as for example, kings or private individuals, was calculated to heighten the impression which the picture was intended to produce. The same may be said of Giottino's idea in his picture of the Last Judgment, in which he has represented Bettino di Bardi at the moment when he is awakened by the trump of the archangel.[1] But from the commencement of the fifteenth century we shall see this, which was at first only a happy union of the ideal and the real, become a hindrance to art; and towards the middle of this century the abuse was carried to such a height that certain painters were not ashamed to place on the altar, in the form of a Madonna, the object of a passion which was, to say the least of it, of an unholy nature.

It was, however, by degrees, that this excess of profanation was reached. At first, these figures were introduced merely as accessories, and without any reason being given for it. Sometimes they were made to assist, with stoical indifference, at interesting and pathetic scenes; at others, they filled up the unoccupied parts of the picture, in a way that spoiled the whole arrangement of the composition. The most judicious painters contented themselves with representing, under the form of a patriarch, an apostle, or a saint, the features of a protector or friend. Thus, Paolo Uccello, when working at the great painting in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella, represented his friend Dello in it, in the person of one of the sons of Noah. Concessions of this kind, when confined within just limits, did

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Giottino.*

not compromise in any great degree the dignity of art; but what power could prevent the boundary line being overstepped in future, or interdict to the profane the entire invasion of the sanctuary?

It must, nevertheless, be acknowledged, that the progress of paganism and naturalism was opposed, with considerable success, in the course of the fifteenth century, by a series of painters, who persisted in drawing their inspirations from a higher source. But these were not the artists who enjoyed most largely, either the favour of the great or the gifts of fortune; and they have seldom found panegyrists in the classical writers of this period. From thence arises a new complication in the history of the Florentine school, composed of elements which become more and more heterogeneous, and which impress painting with tendencies more and more contrary: they are, so to speak, new schools, which proceed almost at the same time from the primitive school. One is formed by the partizans of the old traditions left by the followers of Giotto, and has for its head Lorenzo Bicci, who worked about the middle of the fifteenth century, and to whom, notwithstanding the negligence of his design, a preference was given, probably on account of his antique style over the contemporaneous artists, not one of whom has executed so great a number of works, either in the churches or in the monasteries.[1] Another school, which is in

[1] He was born at the beginning of the century, and died in 1460. He painted in each of the chapels of the cathedral of Florence the figure of the saint to which it was dedicated. It is the only work of his which is well preserved.

fact only a development of the former, had its origin in the workshops of the goldsmiths, and was at first intimately connected with the new school of sculpture founded by Ghiberti, himself a goldsmith, as well as Masolino da Panicale, Ghirlandajo, and Pollajuolo, who assisted him in the fabrication of the famous bronze doors which he made for the church of S. Giovanni. A third school, purer than the others, and of which we shall speak at greater length hereafter, sought its models among those holy personages who had died in the odour of sanctity in the convents, and deposited the result of its pious inspirations in missals and breviaries. All the Florentine artists, the engravers and the workers in niello not excepted, may be placed in one or other of these categories, at least as regards the prevailing character of their productions; and it is only by observing and pointing out these differences that we shall be able to assign to each his proper place in the history of art, and thus establish a generic link between those well-known names, which are classed in Vasari's work, and in the memory of most of his readers, according to an order purely chronological.

Besides Lorenzo Bicci, of whom we have already spoken as the most productive and servile follower of the old style, we will cite Chelini, his contemporary, who does not deserve the total silence with which he has been passed over by Vasari. His paintings can hardly escape the attention of the traveller, as they cover the façade of the Bigallo, which is close to the Baptistery and to Santa Maria del Fiore. The artist has there

represented an important episode in Florentine history, the crusade against the Paterines, preached in 1290 by St. Peter the Martyr, who is represented delivering the gonfalon of the faith to the captains of Santa Maria,—a society of volunteers almost all belonging to noble families, and who had insisted on marching against the heretics. Besides the benediction and distribution of standards for the holy war, he painted a miracle by St. Peter, who discomfits a demon under the form of a winged horse, in presence of a numerous company of men and women, in which the airs of the heads and the animated expression of the figures contrast admirably with the serenity and confidence of the holy preacher. No less worthy of admiration is the monastic humility of his young acolyte, as well as the gravity and firmness of the group of men clothed in the heavy armour of the period.[1] In the interior is another picture, which is easily recognised as being by the same hand. The subject is local, like the preceding, but belongs to a period much nearer to that in which the author worked. After the destruction of the heretics, the captains of Santa Maria had formed themselves into a new association, under the name of the Confraternità della Miseri-

1. Rumohr has rescued the memory as well as the works of Chelini from oblivion. He has, however, exaggerated their worth. The Deposition from the Cross, which is in the sacristy of St. Remi, and which he attributes to him, is very indifferently executed. The paintings at the Bigallo are rather better, but they derive their interest more particularly from the subject. A great part of this work has been destroyed: it was completed in 1444, one year after the death of Masaccio. This date will sufficiently indicate the inferiority of Chelini.

cordia, for the special purpose of founding and supporting hospitals for poor pilgrims;[1] and in 1425 this society, again changing its destination, took upon itself the charge of the lost or abandoned children of Florence. It is the practical object of this pious congregation, which Chelini has represented in a picture full of life and expression. The joy of the mothers who have recognised their children, is as forcibly expressed as the sadness and anxiety of those who are still seeking them: it is a reproduction as faithful as it is touching of one of those pathetic scenes, which the painter had, no doubt, more than once witnessed on this very spot.

Lorenzo Ghiberti has other titles to fame besides his excellence as a sculptor. Not only did he design the windows for the cupola of Santa Maria, but he exercised so marked an influence on art in general that we are sure to find his name wherever a progress is visible. The bas-reliefs on the bronze doors of the Baptistery also form an epoch in the history of painting, or at least in that of design, which he raised at once to a degree of elegance and purity to which no painter before him had approached: indeed Raphael himself did not disdain to profit from his manner of draping, grouping, and arranging his figures;[2] and, in proportion as we advance in this century, we shall have more and more cause to

[1] The confraternity of the Bigallo possessed as many as two hundred and twenty hospitals. Details of this institution may be found, although not very clearly stated, in the *Osservatore Fiorentino*, vol. i. p. 105.

[2] *Rafaele non sdegnò trar modi di panneggiare, di aggruppare le figure, e di attegiarle da questi bronzi del Ghiberti.*—Cicognara.

regret that the Florentine school did not avail itself of his inspirations in preference to all others.

It is to Ghiberti that we are indebted for the first history of art in Italy, a noble and patriotic undertaking, for the execution of which he united every possible advantage: since, on the one hand, the materials for it abounded everywhere, either in the archives or in the monuments, the greater number of which were still perfect; while on the other he found himself placed exactly on the limit which divided the old school from the new. Unfortunately, a fatal prepossession in favour of ancient art made him attach such an importance to the authority of Pliny and Vitruvius, that the extracts from these two authors fill the greater part of his manuscript, whilst the history of modern painting only occupies a small number of pages.

The sculptures of Ghiberti laid the foundation of a progress which was realised in the works of his disciples, who, like himself, had served their apprenticeship in the workshops of the goldsmiths before they assisted him in giving the finishing touches to the doors of the Baptistery. The most skilful of his coadjutors was Masolino, who understood the distribution of light and shade better than any of his predecessors; as may be seen in the famous chapel in the Carmine, where he began at an early age to paint the history of St. Peter, which death did not permit him to complete.[1] This work was continued by Masaccio, who interests us still more both on account of

[1] Masolino performed his part of this work in 1440, and Masaccio died in 1443.

his early death, which happened in his twenty-sixth year, and also from the more lasting and universal admiration he has excited. As these paintings are considered to have effected a sort of revolution in art, it is important to ascertain with precision in what their superiority over all the contemporaneous productions consists.

If, in studying the productions of the Florentine school, we were strictly to adhere to the chronological order, and after having examined the paintings of Spinello at Arezzo, those of Lorenzo Bicci in Santa Maria del Fiore, and those of Chelini in the Bigallo, we were to enter the chapel of the Carmine, which was painted about the same time, we should undoubtedly experience the same degree of astonishment which the sight of this work (at that time incomparable) excited in the contemporaneous spectators. The difference is so striking, that a link seems wanting in the hitherto regular development of every part of the art; and this irregularity would be inexplicable if we were not acquainted with the impulse which the sculptures of Ghiberti gave to painting itself. This influence is easily recognised in the style, in the taste of the design, and in the details of the composition, which retain much of the antique simplicity. Nevertheless, in those parts of the work which are susceptible of a comparison with the bas-reliefs of the Baptistery, the superiority of the latter is incontestable. The merit which peculiarly belongs to the painters of the chapel is the amelioration of the colouring, and particularly of the chiaroscuro; the life which abounds in the countenances, in the attitudes, and in the airs of the heads; as well as the successful attempts at perspective and

new modes of foreshortening: in a word, it is this union of valuable qualities, although not of the highest order, which has led to the remark that the works of Masaccio's predecessors were painted, but that his were living.

With respect to Masolino, we must not give full credit to the praises bestowed upon him by Vasari, viz. that his figures were more majestic and his female heads more graceful than those of any of his predecessors. As regards majesty the comparison is not in his favour, and it is only in relation to what may be termed external grace that his superiority is incontestable.

Masolino had for his master Gherardo Starnina, many of whose works were formerly to be seen at Florence, and represented subjects drawn from the history of the Saints of the Desert, and particularly from that of St. Antony and St. Jerome. The most remarkable of these compositions was in the church of the Carmine, and that which was most admired in it was the happy manner in which he represented the various groups of monks,[1] the introduction of certain very picturesque Spanish costumes, and, above all, the rage of a child who is struggling under the strokes of a whip—a chef-d'œuvre worthy of an artist who, according to Vasari, tortured his imagination in order to imitate natural objects.[2] This characteristic trait may serve to explain the very decided taste for naturalism which the school founded by his disciple always evinced.

[1] See Agincourt, pl. 121.

[2] *Andava ghiribizzando intorno alle cose della natura.*—"Vita di Starnina."

Masaccio is, I believe, the first Florentine painter who can be said to have gone to Rome for the purpose of devoting himself to the study of art,[1] and he was probably inspired with this classical taste from seeing Ghiberti copy with a sort of passion every ancient coin which fell into his hands. "Masaccio," says Vasari, "whose enthusiasm for art would not allow him to rest contentedly at Florence, resolved to go to Rome, that he might there learn to surpass every other painter." It was during this journey, which, in fact, added much to his renown, that he painted in the church of San Clemente—the chapel which now so cruelly disappoints the expectation of the traveller, on account of the successive restorations by which the work has been disfigured. It represents the history of St. Catherine of Alexandria, a more happily chosen subject than that in the Carmine; but the heavy brush which has passed over each compartment has spared neither the delicacy of the outline, the roundness of the forms, nor the play of light and shade: in a word, nothing which constitutes the peculiar merit of Masaccio. It is, then, at Florence that we must seek to appreciate the progress which painting owes to him.

The work of the three painters who have contributed to the embellishment of the chapel of the Carmine can easily be distinguished at the first glance. In that which is by Masolino the figures have much less relief, and the effect of the chiaroscuro is less striking. In that which belongs to Masaccio we observe a progress which is analogous to the order in which the different portions

[1] *Andatosene a Romo per studiore.*—Vasari, *Life of Masaccio.*

of his work have succeeded one another; and we perceive in the latest of them that, in order to produce the desired effect, he was no longer obliged to heighten his lights or darken his shadows to the same degree as formerly.

This composition has all the solemnity which is required in such a subject, nevertheless the naturalism which at that time began to prevail in the Florentine school has also left its impress on it. The figure of St. Paul, "which expresses," says Vasari, "a mixture of Roman urbanity and invincible courage," is simply the full-length portrait of Bartolo Angiolini; and we find in the various groups several other heads, strongly impressed with individuality. In one of the cloisters of the convent there was formerly a large picture, executed in grey tints, representing a procession, at the end of which Masaccio had placed all the most illustrious personages of Florence. At Rome, in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, he introduced the portraits of Pope Martin V. and the Emperor Sigismond II., in the representation of a miracle which had taken place several centuries before their time. Although in the last case this kind of representation may be more legitimate, and that in the former there was no real ground of objection, still, taken together, they afford proof of a more and more decided tendency to narrow the limits of idealism in art.

The same danger did not yet exist with regard to the classical studies, to which he had devoted himself at Rome; and which he, as well as Ghiberti and Masolino his master, made instrumental to the progress of art—not

in copying the ancient statues in order to place them as objects of adoration on a Christian altar, but in borrowing from them those accessories which added much to elegance and purity of design. In a word, it was less the talent of imitation than the power of assimilation that was exercised; and it is this which Vasari confirms in other words, when he says that Masaccio strove to walk in the steps of Donatello and Brunnelleschi, whose enthusiasm for the classical beauties of antiquity never suffered them to compromise the independence and originality of their genius. Brunnelleschi had been his master in perspective and architecture, which Masaccio has introduced with such marvellous effect into his pictures; and this combination, which at that time much increased the value of his works, was particularly admired in a fresco which he executed in Santa Maria Novella, and in which he introduced a vaulting of circular arches, ornamented with roses, which produced the most complete illusion.

Vasari cites more than twenty painters (and they are the most illustrious of the Florentine school) who frequented the chapel of the Carmine, in order to form themselves by the study and imitation of the works of Masaccio; and although we cannot admit all the names he enumerates, enough, nevertheless, remain to constitute a centre of inspirations and traditional doctrines. It will now become important to follow the course of those artists, who entered with the greatest ardour upon the new path which the school of Masaccio had just opened.

CHAPTER V.

New Era formed by the Frescos of Masaccio—Decided and continually increasing Development of Naturalism under the monk Filippo Lippi and Andrea del Castagno—Works of the Florentine Painters in the Sistine Chapel—Cosino Roselli, Baldovinetti, Botticelli, and Dominico Ghirlandajo—Review of the Century—Fatal Influence of the Medici —Pagan Art favoured by them and by Engraving.

THE most celebrated of the disciples of Masaccio was a young novice of the convent of the Carmine, who began almost from his childhood to visit and study daily the frescos of the chapel with such enthusiasm and assiduity, and succeeded so well in appropriating to himself the style of his model, that all who saw his first works declared that the spirit of Masaccio had passed into his body. At the age of seventeen he thought himself able to dispense with a master; and, prematurely stimulated by his impetuous imagination, which the love of art had still more inflamed, he threw himself, without any resource but that of his pencil, into a life of unheard-of perils and adventures, the most romantic of which was his captivity of eighteen months in Barbary, whither he had been carried and sold by corsairs. Having gained his liberty by sketching the portrait of his master in charcoal on the walls of his dungeon, he went first to Naples, where he remained long enough to complete a picture which King Alfonso had ordered him to paint; and afterwards to Florence, where the fame of his adventures,

the facility of his pencil, and, above all, the favour of the Medici, procured him an extraordinary popularity.

A sufficient number of his works have been preserved, in galleries and churches, to enable us to form a tolerably correct idea of the merits and defects which characterise his productions. We rarely find imitations or reminiscences of the antique, either in his architectural decorations or in his manner of draping his figures; we see that living nature has been almost the sole object of his study and his worship. This, in his religious pictures, was productive of results both beneficial and disadvantageous. The advantage consisted in the substitution of smiling and varied landscapes for the architectural backgrounds and learned display of geometrical perspective, everywhere introduced by Masaccio. In fact, Lippi may be considered as the earliest landscape painter of the Florentine school; and whoever has seen the charming picture which is in the Badia, will not think of contesting his claim to this merit, which includes that of a florid and forcible colouring—rare qualities in a Florentine artist. But, on the other hand, the type of his Madonnas and of his saints is so vulgar, and presents such a striking contrast to the imposing severity which characterises works of the same kind in the preceding period, the forgetfulness of the end which Christian art should have in view is carried so far, that it is impossible to pardon his profanations. Vasari's account of his unbridled licentiousness only too clearly explains the predilection with which he has reproduced the heads of certain women, whom he has even had the impudence to place on a throne or in a niche, with a child on their

knees, and receiving the homage of the kings or the shepherds. The beautiful Lucrezia Luti was performing her noviciate in the convent of Santa Margarita at Prato, when Lippi, having been invited by the nuns to paint the picture for the high altar,[1] happened accidentally to see her, and obtained permission that she should sit as a model for the Madonna. In a few days his plot against the innocence of this poor girl was so skilfully contrived, that he succeeded in carrying her off as she was on her way to the cathedral to see the girdle of the holy Virgin, exposed on that day to the veneration of the faithful; and when Pope Eugenius, in order to palliate this scandal, offered him a dispensation of marriage, he did not deign to profit by it, considering the ceremony as superfluous. With a soul so devoid of refinement and dignity, it was impossible that Lippi could raise himself to the level of those religious painters who had given such a high position to art. Consequently, his incapacity discovers itself, not only in his Madonnas, which are generally portraits, in the choice of which he was usually swayed by the passion of the moment, but is still more manifest in the round and curly heads of his angels, and in their fanciful costume; no ray of beatitude illumines their countenances, and whether they are disposed in groups or singly, they always suggest the idea that they are placed there to perform some *espiègleries*. His

[1] This picture may still be seen at Prato, in the house of the *Cancelliere*. The paintings of the *predella*, representing the Adoration of the Magi, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the Presentation in the Temple, have a delicacy of execution, which justifies the praise Vasari bestows on the small figures painted by Lippi.

pencil was only suited to dramatic subjects, and it is to be regretted that he did not employ it upon these more frequently, for he excelled in the expression of action, movement, and, indeed, of all violent emotions. At Prato and Spoleto are two important frescos by this artist, very different both in subject and execution, and which, therefore, enable us to form a satisfactory idea of the nature and extent of his genius. At Spoleto he had to represent the Annunciation, the Birth of Christ, and the Death and Assumption of the Virgin—compositions in which he would naturally fail; at Prato he painted the history of St. Stephen and St. John the Baptist, susceptible both of them, and particularly the first, of all the energy which the artist was so capable of imparting to the actions and affections of his personages.

Lippi may be considered, in many respects, a *mannered* artist, and without injustice may be reproached with having sown the first seeds of decadence in the Florentine school; on the other hand he introduced an element of progress, by the use he made of the good side of naturalism; namely, force and intensity of expression, and particularly by the introduction of landscape backgrounds—a still happier innovation, which might have been attributed to the poetic turn of his imagination, if a recent critic had not proved the influence which the pictures of Van Eyck and his disciples exercised over the Florentine artists about the middle of the fifteenth century. We now know with certainty, that the Italians established in the Low Countries sent at this period many of the works of the Ultramontane school as pious offerings to their country. And thus it was that the church of the hospital

of Santa Maria became possessed of that fine picture by Hugo Van der Goes, the charming details of which—the vase of flowers, the carpet, the rich furniture, and the magnificent landscape—have been reproduced with such happy effect by so many subsequent painters.[1]

From henceforth, therefore, we shall have to bear in mind, not only the two different aspects of naturalism, but the influence of the ultramontane productions, which we shall also recognise in the inferior branches of art, as in miniature painting and engraving. So long as the principle of assimilation is sufficiently strong to elaborate all these elements, painting will not be arrested in its development; and its history, although it becomes gradually more complicated from the quantity and variety of the materials, nevertheless gains in interest both from the increasing extent of its domain and the richness of its results.

Andrea del Castagno was certainly either the disciple or the imitator of Lippi, whose mannered style he adopted, without, however, approaching the beauty of his colouring. So few of his works now remain, even in Florence, that we might almost venture to pass him over in silence, if the assassination of Dominico Veneziano, who had communicated to him the secret of oil-painting, had not procured him a disgraceful celebrity in history. It is, however, difficult to determine to what extent he was capable of taking advantage of this valuable discovery, the importance of which was not then suspected by the

[1] See Waagen on Hubert and John Van Eyck, p. 182; and Rumohr, vol. ii. § 13.

Florentines. Dominico himself, who introduced this new method, did not think fit to make constant use of it; for the altar-piece in the church of Santa Lucia, of the authenticity of which there is no doubt, his name being written at full-length upon it, is painted in distemper. It represents a Madonna seated on a throne, with four saints ranged symmetrically, two on each side—a calm and simple composition, of which examples were already to be found in the school of Giotto, and which may be probably traced back to a much earlier period.[1]

Dominico had already obtained some reputation by the graceful paintings with which he had adorned the sacristy of Loretto, when, unfortunately for himself, he came to Florence, where, in consequence of his intimacy with Andrea del Castagno, he was employed conjointly with him to paint the chapel of the hospital of Santa Maria. The rivalry which sprung from this common occupation ended in the bloody catastrophe, the author of which remained unknown until the day when Andrea avowed his crime on his deathbed.

The subject which Andrea del Castagno painted in this chapel, partly in fresco and partly in oil, was peculiarly unsuited to him; it was the history of the Virgin from her birth to her assumption. That which was prin-

[1] See D'Agincourt, pl. 117; a composition by Puccio Capanna, a pupil of Giotto. The Madonna is standing on a throne: on one side are St. Francis, St. Lawrence, St. Anthony, and St. Stephen; on the other, St. Clare, St. Ursula, St. Catherine, and St. Mary Magdalen. Plate 124 gives a still more ancient example, with the date of 1336. The Virgin is seated; the ornaments of the throne and the type of the child are Byzantine, but that of the Virgin possesses great beauty: there are two saints on each side.

cipally admired in it was an octagon temple, ornamented with pilasters and niches, each of which seemed to contain a marble statue; that is to say, the illusions of perspective constituted its greatest charm. Admiration was also excited by the manner in which certain pieces of furniture were foreshortened; but, above all, by the striking resemblance of a number of portraits, which he substituted for the traditional figures of the apostles who prayed and wept around the bed of death; and as he was at that time meditating his crime, he had the audacity to introduce himself in the character of Judas Iscariot—a personification to which he had a double title, from having, after the conspiracy of the Pazzi, placed his pencil at the command of the Medici, and painted the punishment of the conspirators on the tower of the Palazzo del Podestà, in consequence of which he acquired the name of *Andrea degli impiccati.*

Thus, skill in perspective, in foreshortening, and in the portraits of the living and the dead, namely, of those who had been executed, constitutes the whole merit of this degraded artist, who merely availed himself of the prosaic or ignoble side of naturalism, and only counterbalanced by a few slight advantages the injury he did to the more essential parts of art.

Of his pupils, Pisello followed most faithfully in his steps, and made the greatest efforts to appropriate to himself the style of his master. His picture of the Adoration of the Magi, which was placed by special favour on the staircase of the palace, was particularly admired on account of the portraits he introduced into it; but we are bound in justice to add, that he was the first painter who made a

really artistic use of the varieties of the animal kingdom, and that in the representation of birds, quadrupeds, and insects, he was superior to all his contemporaries. This was a new step, increasing the accessory resources of painting, which gained at least in extent what she daily lost in elevation and depth.

Andrea del Castagno had for his fellow-labourer in the hospital of Santa Maria, a painter of the name of Alessio Baldovinetti, whose imagination was singularly captivated with the inanimate objects of nature; in all his pictures he introduced rivers, fountains, bridges, rocks, meadows, and trees with their various kinds of foliage. A fresco by him, in a very dilapidated state, may still be seen in the court of the church of the Servites, the details of which, most minutely treated, show a sort of passion in the artist for this inferior kind of imitation. We may count the straws which cover the manger in which the infant Jesus lies; even the effect produced upon the stone by the alternation of the seasons is clearly indicated, as well as the varied tint of the ivy which covers it. He has, however, failed in his colouring from having attempted new combinations; his design is dry and crude; and if his frescos in the church of Santa Trinità had not been destroyed, we should have seen with a kind of disgust the Medici, the Pitti, the Strozzi, and the Guicciardini, personating the characters of the Old Testament, and destroying, by their intrusion into these simple and imposing subjects, all the charm and grandeur which belong to patriarchal scenes when judiciously chosen.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, Rome and

St. Peter became to the Tuscan and Umbrian artists what Assisi and St. Francis had been a hundred years before to the disciples of Giotto; and we shall have to follow to this new theatre those Florentine painters who close the history of the period which now occupies us.

It was Pope Sixtus IV. who invited them to the Vatican, where he had just built the chapel which still bears his name, and to which the sublime paintings of Michael Angelo subsequently gave so great a celebrity. To say the truth, they absorb the attention of the greater number of travellers, who, besides the overwhelming authority of a great name, which they have so frequently heard pronounced with enthusiasm, are also under the influence of the impressions of awe and admiration which the Prophets on the ceiling and the Last Judgment seldom fail to produce. The mind is too much distracted to be able to appreciate, on the first or even on the second visit, the more calm and simple compositions, which are distributed in twelve compartments along the whole length of the parallelogram, in such a manner as to place the Old and New Testament opposite to one another. But, on returning for the third time, it is seldom that the eye and the mind do not delight to find repose amid these patriarchal scenes, to which the freshness of the landscape lends an additional charm; and these paintings will in the end obtain, notwithstanding the colossal compositions by which they are eclipsed, all the attention they would from the first have commanded, if they were less removed from the eye of the spectator, or if the size of the figures were proportioned

to their distance and to the grandeur of the chapel which contains them.

The works of the Florentine school are here mingled with those of the Umbrian,—a new combination, the general results of which will occupy us hereafter; at present we have to treat of those Florentine artists who continued, with more or less servility, the naturalism so universally adopted by their countrymen.

Cosimo Rosselli has painted four compartments in the Sistine Chapel, whilst those among his fellow-labourers who were most favoured after himself only painted three; which would incline us to the belief, that before he undertook this great work he had acquired his highest title to the reputation he generally enjoys in the history of art. Vasari does not tell us who his first master was; but a very slight examination of the great fresco in the church of St. Ambrogio at Florence, and on which can still be read his name, with the date 1456, will convince us that he took neither Lippi nor Castagno for models among his contemporaries. This picture represents the removal of a miraculous chalice to the episcopal palace, and contains groups which would not be unworthy of the pencil of Raphael, so much taste prevails in the arrangement, and in the manner of treating the draperies and other accessories. This early but inestimable work seems to have been executed, in part, under the influence of the frescos of Masaccio, but much more under that of Fra Angelico da Fiesole, to whom a rather later production of Cosimo Rosselli's, the Coronation of the Virgin, which is in the church of Santa Maria Maddelena, was long attributed. The prevalence of this error for so long a

period, in the midst of so many facilities for its correction, sufficiently proves that the resemblance between the two artists was not imaginary; and it exists, in fact, to a remarkable degree, in the profile of the Virgin, and in the character of certain heads: but in the rest of the picture, and particularly in the figures of the angels, the decadence is already apparent, and it must have reached a very advanced stage when he was called to Rome in 1474, for the paintings in the Sistine are extremely inferior to those in the church of St. Ambrogio. In the destruction of Pharaoh and his host the principal part of the picture is treated with extraordinary heaviness: he has succeeded better in some of the accessories, as in the great black cloud which is seen in the distance above the domes and towers, and in the charming female figure who, with eyes raised to heaven, one knee resting on the earth, the other supporting her lyre, chants her canticle of praise. In the next picture there is nothing to redeem the heaviness of his pencil, and the figure of Moses, repeated in five different scenes without their succession being indicated by a due gradation in the different parts of the picture, renders this ill-arranged composition still more confused. The Sermon on the Mount is much better treated, not as regards the types of the personages, but because the laws of perspective are better observed in the landscape. Unfortunately this landscape is not by him, but by his pupil, Pier di Cosimo, who rendered him several services of this kind, especially in the fourth picture, representing the Last Supper, which would doubtless be found superior to the three others, had it not been twice

restored.[1] On his return to Florence, the style of Cosimo Rosselli only continued to decline during the ten remaining years of his life; and we may see in the court of the church of the Annunziata, where he has painted the reception of San Filippo Benizzi into the order of the Servites,[2] to what a point naturalism (a kind of vicissitude of which we shall find more than one example) had degraded the last productions of his pencil.

The two other Florentine painters who worked with him in the Sistine Chapel, Alessandro Botticelli and Dominico Ghirlandajo, had, like Masaccio, served their apprenticeship in a goldsmith's workshop, which was equal at that time to a school of painting, on account of the relations which existed between the painters and the goldsmiths.[3] The former passed from thence into the studio of Lippi, and adopted the manner, style, and vulgar types of his master; with the exception, however, of that of the Madonna, who, in the pictures of Botticelli, almost always wears an expression of melancholy. His imagination and his pencil seem to have been most employed on impassioned and dramatic subjects; and it is in the representation of these that he has succeeded best, as may be seen on comparing the three compartments painted by him in the Sistine

[1] Taja, *Descrizione del Vaticano.* Rumohr gives the preference to this picture, even in its present state.

[2] Richa says that this work was executed in 1476.—*Delle chiese di Firenze*, t. viii. p. 108.

[3] *Era in questa età una dimestichezza grandissima e quasi che una continova practica tra gli orefici ed i pittori.*—Vasari, *Vita di Botticelli.*

Chapel. That in which he has brought together, not without some confusion, the principal incidents in the life of Moses at the commencement of his mission, surpasses all the works which surround it in vivacity of expression; there is a mixture of heroic and pastoral poetry in the episode of the daughters of Jethro, surrounded by their flocks, and chivalrously defended by Moses against the shepherds, which would leave nothing to be desired had the figure of the deliverer been as happily conceived as the group of young virgins, whose simple and animated attitudes, tresses of golden hair, and long white garments, arrest the attention of the spectator so completely, as to distract it from the other parts of the composition. The compartment in which the artist has represented the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, is only remarkable for the gradation of light, which is more carefully observed in the second and third divisions of the picture; and the Temptation of Christ in the desert was a subject too foreign to the peculiar genius of his pencil, to admit of its being treated with the same success as the history of Moses.

Only one compartment now remains painted by Dominico Ghirlandajo, who must then have been in the flower of his age. It represents the calling of Andrew and Peter, who kneel before Christ; but the type of the Redeemer does not correspond to the noble character of the heads of the two apostles, strikingly admirable for their profound humility of expression. But we must not form our judgment of him from this feeble production of his youth; it is in the churches and galleries of Florence,

where his most brilliant works are seen in all their glory, that we must learn to appreciate the fertility and maturity of his genius, always original, even where he appears to imitate. He derived his surname of Ghirlandajo from a certain ornament in the form of a garland, of which he was the inventor, and which became so popular as to be in constant requisition among the young girls of Florence. The little images, which the devotion of the faithful had accumulated in the holy chapel of the Annunziata, were so many precious works produced by his hand, and executed with the same care he would have bestowed on a public monument. These titles to glory and popularity, thus infinitely multiplied, caused him to be cherished and admired by his countrymen, of whom Vasari tells us he was the delight;[1] and we can easily understand how natural was their admiration when we see the magnificent productions with which he decorated his country, from which he was snatched away by death in the midst of his career.[2]

It would be impossible and useless to enumerate all his paintings in fresco and oil, even were we to confine ourselves to those which have escaped destruction. It will suffice to notice the grand compositions which he has left behind him in three of the churches of Florence, and some altar pictures, in which his favourite subject, the Adoration of the Magi, is represented.

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[1] *Fu diletto grande dell' età sua.*—Vasari, *Vita de Ghirlandajo. Aveva commesso ai garzoni che si accettasse qualunque lavoro che capitasse a bottega, sebbene fussaro cu chi da paniere di donne; perchè non li volendo fare esse, li dipignerebbe da se.*

[2] He died in 1493, at the age of forty-four.—*Ibid.*

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The first works of any importance executed by him on his return from Rome, appear to have been the Last Supper, and the St. Jerome in the cloister and church of the Ogni Santi. Here, as in the Sistine, the head of Christ is a failure, whilst those of the apostles are well characterised, particularly the Judas, whose physiognomy is striking. The St. Jerome appears to have been executed, at least the landscape and the other accessories, under the influence of the charming pictures of the school of Van Eyck, which were now becoming less rare in Italy; the colouring, however, has not yet, at least in the carnations, that vigour and beauty which has led Vasari to say that, in the art of fresco painting, Ghirlandajo was the first master of his time. We shall, perhaps, think this praise exaggerated before we have seen the history of St. Francis, which he painted five years later (1485), in a chapel of Santa Trinità, with a success which might have afforded an instructive lesson to those artists who were always running after new subjects. It had been more frequently treated than any other during the two preceding centuries, and yet the popular devotion had never wearied of this eternal repetition founded on uniform traditions. The painters themselves were the first to reject it; and since the technical part of art had become enriched with so many new resources, the taste for mystical representations had declined more and more. From a better appreciation than any of his contemporaries of all the poetry they contain, Ghirlandajo surpassed them all, and even surpassed himself, when he conformed to tradition in the arrangement of the groups and in the disposition of the

principal scenes: as for example, in the death of St. Francis, the most beautiful, perfect, and pathetic of them all, but also that in which the artist appears to have trod most closely in the steps of his predecessors. Even naturalism itself has been turned to account in this marvellous work, in the intensity of expression which characterises the heads of certain aged monks, in the large folds of their picturesque draperies, in the different effects of light, and in a multitude of other details, which prove that Ghirlandajo understood all the advantage that might be derived from the study of monastic life in its relation to art.

The great fresco which is in the choir of Santa Maria Novella, and which bears date 1490, is, incontestably, the most magnificent work of this kind which Florence possesses, and crowns, in a worthy manner, the glorious career of its author, who died within three years after its completion. On the wall to the right he has represented the history of St. John the Baptist; on the left, that of the holy Virgin; and at the end, some incidents in the life of St. Dominic and of St. Peter the Martyr. I shall not stop to describe this immense composition, very ample details of which may be found in Vasari; it will suffice to verify and point out the kind of progress which it presents, when compared with Ghirlandajo's preceding works. In the painting of the Last Supper, executed ten years earlier, in the convent of the Ogni Santi, his colouring is still feeble, particularly in the carnations; here, on the contrary, all the effects of direct and reflected light are carefully treated, and calculated in such a manner as

to blend happily with the half-tints, and successfully maintain the local tone. With regard to naturalism, which also plays an important part in the greater number of these compartments, it partakes so much of the *grandiose* character of the whole composition, all the portraits which are introduced so evidently form the suite of the principal personages, they have so much dignity in their bearing, their costumes are so picturesque, and, finally, their presence contributes so much to the harmony and majesty of the whole, that it is impossible for the imagination to desire anything more. Laudable efforts have also been made to elevate the type of the Virgin, which Lippi had so degraded; and if, in this respect, the Madonnas of Ghirlandajo are still inferior to some of the fourteenth century, it must not be forgotten that, with the exception of the mystical school, of which we shall shortly speak, he has at least raised himself infinitely above his contemporaries.

Several of his pictures are preserved in the galleries of Florence, and it is easy to perceive on comparing them, that they belong to very different periods. In four of these his favourite subject, the Adoration of the Magi, is represented—a subject which he has repeated more frequently than any artist of his time. If we confine our attention to the principal figure, which is usually a modest and pretty Florentine matron, we shall assuredly be tempted to pass on; but the manner in which he has treated the secondary personages, the well-selected costumes, the charm of the colouring, the finish of the details, the elegance of the buildings, and, more than all, the aërial perspective, irresistibly captivate

the eye of the spectator. The happy attempts before his time to make use of landscape backgrounds in devotional or historical pictures, had been limited to the imitation of natural objects, disposed and arranged, as much as possible, in conformity to the well-known laws of lineal perspective; but the progress of aërial perspective had not been the same, and all that the painter could do was to avoid whatever demanded a deeper knowledge than he possessed of this difficult part of his art. Thus we rarely see represented in works of this period the rising or the setting of the sun, or a sheet of water extending far away into the horizon. Ghirlandajo offers the first example of this kind of excellence in a picture which is in the gallery of the Grand Duke, and in which he has introduced a view of the lagunes of Venice, given with a surprising degree of truth for a first attempt. But the chef-d'œuvre which displays this kind of excellence in the highest degree exists in the chapel of a hospital which forms one of the sides of the Piazza del Annunziata. It is a repetition of his favourite subject, the Adoration of the Magi, with the type of the Virgin as usual defective; but with this single exception, there is such a degree of poetical feeling to be found in the accessories, that the most systematic severity remains disarmed before the altar. In the background the artist has introduced an affecting representation of the Massacre of the Innocents—the mothers who endeavour to rescue their infants from death find themselves placed between a river and the steel of the executioner; while in soul-soothing contrast, the river, which winds out of sight in the distance, divides a

charming landscape bounded by beautiful mountain-tops, and by a sky of admirable transparency and purity. This picture bears the date of 1488, and was, therefore, executed during the interval that elapsed between the fresco of the Trinità and that of Santa Maria Novella; that is to say, at the time when the author, having become conscious of his power, told his brother David that, being now initiated in the secrets of his art, he regretted that he had not been commissioned to cover the entire surface of the city-walls with historical paintings.

Dominico Ghirlandajo formed a great number of scholars, who all belong to the following period. In order that nothing of importance may be omitted in that which now occupies us, it will be necessary still to notice, independently of the mystic school of which we shall soon have to speak, two other painters, who also worked at Rome, and whose productions are marked by an individuality of character which entitles each of them to a special mention. I allude to Filippino Lippi, son of the painter of the same name and of Lucrezia Luti, the young novice whom he had carried off from a convent at Prato; and to Antonio Pollajuolo, whose name figures with honour among those of the sculptors, painters, and engravers of this period.

Filippino's three principal works, taking them in the order in which they were composed, are, the fresco in the chapel of Masaccio; that which he executed at Rome for Cardinal Caraffa, in the church of the Minerva; and, lastly, the History of St. John and St. Philip, painted after his return to Florence for the Strozzi family, in a chapel of Santa Maria Novella.

Masaccio, who had now been dead about forty years, had left several portions of his great work in the Carmine incomplete, and since then the progress made by art rendered it very possible that a continuator who came so long after him might have surpassed him. Nevertheless, such is not the fact, not only as regards the arrangement and character into which Masaccio has thrown all the elevation and gravity required by the subject, but also in the mechanical execution, in which we see it was always his aim to give roundness and relief to his figures; whilst Filippino, satisfied with the superficial brilliancy of his pencil, knew not even how to profit by the masterpiece before him. If we pursue this comparison into all the details, his inferiority becomes still more apparent; for *mannerism* already betrays itself in his draperies, the small folds of which, irregularly broken, contrast most disadvantageously with the pure taste of Masaccio, who draped his figures with such freedom and simplicity that even the contemporaries of Raphael never wearied of admiring them. It was only in the treatment of the backgrounds and landscapes that Filippino showed an incontestable superiority over his predecessor, which, indeed, the lessons of his father had greatly facilitated.

What would be inexplicable, if the influence under which he was constantly placed were unknown to us, is the progressive development of those faults of which we only perceive, so to speak, the germs in his first works: for the fresco in the Minerva, as compared with that in the church of the Carmine at Florence, is in many respects a retrogression; and were it not that the at-

tention is even here agreeably distracted by the landscape, the spectator would only carry an unfavourable impression away with him. It must be confessed that no subject could be less adapted to an imagination so little mystical as was that of Filippino. It was his province to represent the victory of faith over infidelity: St. Thomas defending the Church against the most famous heresiarchs, and afterwards receiving on his knees, before the crucifix, the miraculous assurance of the truth of his doctrines.[1] This solemn subject should surely have offered him no temptation to sport lightly with his pencil, to represent his personages with curly locks, to envelop them in mannered draperies, and to turn against art itself the technical methods which should only be employed for its improvement. These defects, and many others, are to be found in the chapel of the Minerva; and his long residence at Rome, at a period when enthusiasm for the antique had just revived, had so little effect in correcting his innate taste for affectation, that his last work in the church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence is still more obviously marked with it, while at the same time the graceful details and pleasing accessory groups contained in it, prevent the attention of the spectator from being too much fixed on the principal personages. In order to modify by some slight praise the severity of our criticism, we must select from the numerous Madonnas of Filippino those which were in all probability painted immediately after the completion

[1] He heard a voice which addressed him in these words: "*Benè scripsisti di me, Thoma.*"

of the chapel of Masaccio. Of this number is, probably, that still existing in a kind of tabernacle near the convent of Santa Margarita at Prato, and which surpassed in beauty of profile all that had hitherto proceeded from the naturalisti school to which Filippino belonged, and of which he was himself one of the worst specimens.

Happily the series of traditions commenced by his father, and continued by Castagno, Botticelli, and himself, became extinct in the third generation; for of his two immediate disciples mentioned by Vasari, the first, Raffaellino del Garbo, who imitated him so well that his works were often mistaken for those of his master, did not realise any of the hopes entertained of him from a picture painted in early youth,[1] but only continued to degenerate until his death; the other, Niccolo Cartoni, sank even during his life into that neglect which the commonplace mediocrity of his works deserved, and is worthy to close a list of painters who have only developed the worst features of naturalism.

We have already spoken of Antonio Pollajuolo in the history of sculpture, and of the assistance he rendered Ghiberti while the latter was working at the bronze gates of the Baptistery. The habits Antonio had already contracted as a goldsmith and sculptor, when he commenced the study of painting under the auspices of his brother Pietro Pollajuolo, a pupil of Andrea del Castagno, gave a peculiar turn to his genius, which procured

[1] This picture, representing the Resurrection of Christ, is now in the academy delle Belle Arti at Florence.

him the glory of having introduced a new element into painting; namely, the study of anatomy, or of the different parts of the human body in their most minute details. Thus he understood how to represent the nude better than any preceding painter, in consequence of the numerous dissections he had performed on dead bodies, for the purpose of ascertaining the respective position of the muscles, their protuberance and depression under the surface of the skin. The most admired of his works, from the display made in it of these new principles, was the martyrdom of St. Sebastian in the Cappella Pucci; a most interesting and poetical subject, but one which has been more frequently profaned than any other, on account of the opportunity it presents for the development of this very inferior kind of merit. Naturalism was at this time so firmly established in the Florentine school, that no scandal was felt when, in the figure of the holy martyr, the full-length portrait of Gino Capponi was recognised, although such a travesty was not at all compatible with the avowed object of religious representations.

A St. Christopher, which he painted between the towers of San Miniato, surpassed in its gigantic proportions all that had been hitherto executed. This colossal figure, in which organic form was even more distinctly expressed than in the St. Sebastian, often attracted a young artist to this commanding spot (the finest situation in the environs of Florence), who entered upon the scene at the moment that Pollajuolo quitted it. This artist, whom we ought, perhaps, already to have noticed among the disciples of Dominico Ghirlandajo, was Michael Angelo Buonarotti, and this name will suffi-

ciently announce to us that we are about to approach a new epoch.

But before entering upon it, a two-fold task remains to us. In the first place, it is necessary to make a resumé of the century, the history of which we have just completed; to compare what art has lost in some respects with what it may have gained in others; and to determine with a rigorous precision the progress that painting has still to make. We must next seek in Tuscany and Umbria for the scattered and precious elements of a school which has hitherto been scarcely named by us, although several Tuscan artists have had the glory of belonging to it. I allude to the mystic school, originally only a detached branch of the Florentine, and cultivated with peculiar predilection in the mountains which adjoin the sanctuary of Assisi, far from the prosaic inspirations of paganism and naturalism.

In order to judge of the extensive progress painting had made since the beginning of the fifteenth century, we have only to compare the frescos of Lorenzo Bicci with those of Ghirlandajo. To make such an advance possible, it was necessary that Paolo Uccello should discover and apply, with the assistance of Euclid, the laws of lineal perspective; that Masaccio, by a most skilful combination of light and shade, should learn to give roundness and relief to form, and should borrow from the ancient bas-reliefs the good taste of his arrangement and draperies; that the pictures of the school of Van Eyck should give the Florentine artists an idea of more vigorous and brilliant colouring, and exhibit the best features of naturalism; that Lippi should charm the eyes

of his countrymen by the freshness and variety of the landscapes which form the background of the greater number of his pictures; that Baldovinetti should apply himself to the delineation of the minutest objects in nature, not to speak of a number of other improvements, due to the patience of several artists of inferior reputation and imperceptibly introduced into art.

The order in which this kind of synthetical movement has displayed itself, by virtue of which painting, insensibly extending its domain, has gradually conquered heaven and earth, the three kingdoms of nature, and, if we may so express it, the four elements, can never be contemplated with greater interest than at the exact point we have now reached in the history of art; that is to say, immediately before the period at which the remarkable unity which has hitherto characterised it is unfortunately about to cease.

At the time when mosaic was the prevailing and almost exclusive form of Christian painting, the majestic figure of Christ was usually placed in the tribune, the right hand resting on the book of life, with this inscription in large characters: *Ego sum via, veritas, et vita.* To strike the imagination of the faithful on their entrance to the temple by the image of the Incarnate God whose mediation they came to invoke, and to strengthen that impression by those words which so admirably expressed the whole mission of the Redeemer, was the aim of Christian art in its primitive simplicity and grandeur.

In this kind of representation, either of Christ alone or surrounded by his apostles, the artist was generally absorbed in the principal subject, and consequently the

accessory details were entirely overlooked in the composition of his work.

When the mosaic represented the coronation of the Virgin, it was between heaven and earth, in the infinite space of the empyrean, that this mystical scene, from which all terrestrial objects were naturally removed, was made to pass. From this height, which Christian art occupied at its birth, it soon descended into lower regions, to seek and appropriate to itself all the subjects properly belonging to it, always marking them with its divine impress, and never losing sight of its origin or its destination; so that, notwithstanding the imperfection and even coarseness of the methods employed in the execution, there seemed always a ray of celestial light, transforming the rude work of man into a fit object for the believer's worship.

The revolution effected by Giotto did not in any degree diminish the popularity which certain holy subjects had for ten centuries enjoyed: in proof of this, it is sufficient to cite the representations of the crowning of the Virgin, multiplied almost endlessly by himself and his immediate disciples; but as this school, following the example of its founder, delighted in the representation of certain details of human life, and entered upon dramatic subjects which called for considerable movement and action, art was constrained to ally itself more intimately with nature, and enlarge the sphere of its assimilations.

In consequence of a development that might almost be called fatal, the unity of art was broken as early as the commencement of the fifteenth century, and the

painters, divided by a kind of schism, shared, if we may so speak, its domain amongst themselves; some continuing to receive their inspirations from above, while the others, who formed indeed the greater number, fell into the snare spread for them by naturalism, and no longer sought to connect their arbitrary creations with that centre of unity from whence painting, like all the other Christian arts, had originally proceeded.

The only way in which the schismatic painters could henceforth distinguish themselves, was by the exact and minute imitation of nature, whether living or inanimate,—an imitation which could not fail, sooner or later, to become, as indeed was the case, both in practice and in the theories which then arose, the supreme and avowed aim of art: thus the representation of birds, quadrupeds, mountains, rivers, rocks,—in a word, of all the details which enter into the composition of a landscape or a *genre* picture, usually occupy a prominent place in the works of this school; and this, far from being a fault, might be considered as a real progress, if the idolatry of nature had not been carried to the extent of substituting the prosaic portraits of living personages for the traditional types of Jesus Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints.

With this decided tendency for materialism, mystical subjects could not long remain in favour, and particularly those which, like the coronation of the Virgin, did not admit of the introduction of family portraits, landscapes, well-known buildings, nor, indeed, of any of those accessory embellishments by which the painters who devoted themselves to this branch of art sought to obtain the suffrages

of their fellow-citizens: accordingly, this magnificent subject, so popular in the early schools, fell more and more into disuse with the Florentine artists; and this is the reason why we find it so rarely mentioned in the enumeration of their works at a later period.

It was only in historical subjects, cultivated with peculiar predilection in this century, that this devotion to naturalism could be advantageous; and it is in these that we find the most remarkable instances of successful treatment: a slight compensation, however, for the impotence with which art seemed smitten, in all that related to the production of the higher order of works. Altar pictures, it is true, continued to be innumerably multiplied, to satisfy the demands created by the piety of the faithful, in whose eyes the image of Christ and of the Virgin were an integral part of religious worship: but these calm and simple representations, which, notwithstanding the decadence of the types themselves, still produced their effect on the imagination of the people, were no longer painted *con amore* by the artists; and the principal figure, although still placed in conformity with received usage in the centre of the picture, was generally sacrificed to those secondary details for which the artist seemed to reserve all the poetry of his imagination.

Preference was therefore naturally given in religious pictures to historical subjects, rather than to those borrowed from the doctrines of Christianity; and from the same reason, such subjects were more frequently drawn from the Old than from the New Testament: it was quite the contrary, however, in the works of the

Venetian school, from causes which we shall have occasion to explain in another chapter. Perhaps in this choice the Florentine artists acted under the influence of another cause, namely, their natural affinity with all that had a tendency to call forth the qualities by which they were especially distinguished. The boldness and energy of their pencil enabled them to undertake any subject in which action and movement was required, no matter how violent or complicated, with the certainty of tracing on the canvass or the wall the faithful delineation of any historical episode. But it required skill of a higher order to reproduce, in a manner worthy of the subject, the most interesting scenes in the life of the Redeemer, to give to the incarnate God, and to the personages grouped around him, a character befitting the part assigned to each of them in the touching and mysterious drama of the redemption. Not one of the naturalistic painters whom we have mentioned satisfy, in this respect, the exigencies of the Christian soul, and the complaints we shall have to make of this partial sterility will become more and more bitter in proportion as we advance in our history, and see art, under the influence of paganism, enter upon a still more deviating course, which will render its decline inevitable.

These pagan inspirations came at the same time from two directions, from Rome and from the court of the Medici; and it must be admitted that the first were not only less dangerous but more excusable. In presence of those picturesque ruins, to which also such glorious recollections were attached, it was difficult for the most exclusively Christian imagination not to be strongly

moved; and when this wonderful scene spread itself for the first time before the eye of the artist, it was natural that he should endeavour to immortalise in his own works the extraordinary impression he had received. His powers of assimilation were tested by the manner in which he incorporated these foreign elements with those which more properly belonged to his subject, and this power was singularly variable, according to the period and the individuals who exercised it. Some, struck with the straight lines of Roman architecture, introduced them into the background of all their pictures; others studied the beautiful and simple arrangement of the bas-reliefs, or the draperies of the statues discovered under the ruins of the fallen edifices, while many were content to copy accessory ornaments, such as grotesque[1] and warlike trophies, and each returned from his classical excursion with the spoils best suited to the nature and extent of his genius.

The painters who worked at Rome under the pontificate of Sixtus IV. returned to Florence with minds stored with classical reminiscences, which they were encouraged to reproduce in their works by the numerous admirers of Greek and Roman literature. Filippino Lippi's wealth, in this respect, consisted of armour, trophies, vases, emblems, and other antique ornaments, which he has reproduced in a great number of works, and especially in the Cappella Strozzi. Of all the imi-

[1] The first painter who especially devoted himself to grotesques was Andrea di Cosimo, a pupil of Cosimo Rosselli, and not Guido di Feltro, as has been commonly supposed.—See Vasari, *Vita di Cosimo Rosselli.*

tations of Roman monuments this was, unquestionably, the most innocent, and at the same time the most sterile and superficial; thus we can easily understand that painters who, like Botticelli and Ghirlandajo, were more in earnest than Lippi, would not limit themselves to the insignificant reproduction of certain accessory details.[1] In fact, they both entered far more deeply into the spirit of antiquity, and the compartments painted by Botticelli in the Sistine Chapel show the happy effect he could produce by that union of columns, triumphal arches, and half-ruined palaces, which add so singularly to the picturesque beauty of his works.[2] As for Ghirlandajo, who had scarcely reached his twenty-fifth year when he first visited Rome, he was, no doubt, transported at the sight of these noble ruins, with that youthful enthusiasm which the most gifted traveller never experiences a second time: he examined every nook with indefatigable ardour, making designs of the temples, aqueducts, baths, triumphal arches, amphitheatres, and particularly of the Coliseum, which had not yet been robbed of its stones for the construction of modern palaces. But the same artist, who felt such enthusiasm for the august remains of Roman grandeur, was still more deeply impressed by the sight of the ancient mosaics of the Christian basilicas, the image of which was still present to his mind when

[1] Lippi has introduced a triumphal arch into his fresco at Santa Maria Novella, but it is overloaded with ornaments in bad taste.

[2] It is that which represents the death of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

he said, at a more advanced age: *that mosaic was the true painting for eternity.*[1]

The paganism which prevailed at the court of the Medici, being as much the result of a general corruption of morals as of the progress of erudition, possessed nothing of that *grandiose* character which armed it with such irresistible force on the forum. What were the subjects proposed by Lorenzo di Medici to the first artists of Florence, whom he made the objects of that enlightened patronage which has secured him such renown in history? To Pollajuolo he suggested the twelve labours of Hercules; to Ghirlandajo, the edifying story of the misfortunes of Vulcan; to Luca Signorelli, gods and goddesses in all the charms of nudity; and by way of compensation, a chaste Pallas to Botticelli, who, notwithstanding the natural purity of his imagination, was also obliged to paint a Venus for Cosimo di Medici, and to repeat the same subject more than once, with the various alterations suggested by his learned patron!

The enthusiasm of the learned, and of the artists who allowed themselves to be influenced by them, would now have reached its height, could a picture by one of the celebrated masters of antiquity have been brought to light at the same time with those master-pieces of sculpture which were every day discovered beneath the ruins of the fallen edifices. Had this been the case, modern art would have been in possession of a model from

[1] *La vera pittura per l'eternità essere il musaïco.*—Vasari, *Vita di Ghirlandajo.*

which an unalterable rule of taste, and an unerring theory of the beautiful, might have been deduced and applied to painting. This hope not being realised so speedily as the lovers of the antique had flattered themselves, Botticelli kindly strove to console them by recomposing, with the aid of a passage in Lucian, the famous Calumny of Apelles; and whoever will condescend to notice a work of secondary importance, may see in the gallery of the Grand Duke this singular production, in which there is a mixture of simplicity and erudite pedantry. At a later period the same attempt was renewed by Raphael, and with greater success by Frederigo Zucchero, who was forced to fly from Rome in consequence of the personal and satirical allusions with which he had sought to enliven his subject.[1]

A new process, which became the means of multiplying works of art to an immense extent, was at this time invented by a goldsmith named Maso Finiguerra. The famous *Pax*,[2] so well known in the history of engraving, and a very fine example of which may be seen in the collection of engravings in the Royal Library at Paris, first appeared at Florence in 1452; the period at which Faust and Gutenberg printed their first Latin Bible. This discovery removed the obstacles which the distance between the localities had hitherto inter-

[1] Baglioni, *Vita di Feder Zucchero.* Lomazzo, *Trattato della Pitura*, i. vii. c. 2. In his first work, Zucchero was content with the simple reproduction of the picture of Calumny, according to the description given of it by Lucian; and this is the work which has been engraved by Cornelius Cort. In the other he gratified a feeling of revenge.

[2] Thus called because it receives the kiss of peace in the ceremonies of religion.

posed to any reciprocal influence between the different schools. The compositions of the German engravers, so full of life and originality, were soon spread throughout Italy, and even the works of Martin Schoen made their appearance in that country almost immediately after those of Finiguerra.[1]

Among the artists who may be considered as the followers of the latter, there is not one who equals him, either in the delicate manner of handling the burin or in the design and expression of the figures.[2] Baccio Baldini, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, was incontestably the least mannered of them. Pollajuolo, however, from being a more skilful draftsman, succeeded in the execution of plates of much larger dimensions; but his superiority in this respect was counterbalanced by the harshness of his contours, which were always too strongly marked, by the painful monotony of his tints, and also by the fantastic and unpoetic choice of his subjects. He devoted himself especially to the representation of the nude, and for this reason he selected, as a painter, St. Sebastian and St. Christopher; and as an engraver, the labours of Hercules or gladiatorial combats.[3]

Mantegna also represented subjects from the antique, but his views on this point were very different from those

[1] Martin Schoen engraved from 1460 to 1486, at which period he died.

[2] In the Pax in the Bibliothèque Royale is a group of three figures, which would not be unworthy of the school of Leonardo da Vinci or Raphael.

[3] The reader is no doubt aware, that the principal work of Pollajuolo is a combat between ten naked gladiators.

which had led the artists his contemporaries into this new and dangerous path. The latter, in order to please their corrupt patrons, vied with each other in the reproduction of the voluptuous traditions of Greek mythology; Mantegna only appears to have been struck with the severe dignity of the Roman character, as expressed in the monuments of art; hence that noble and grandiose style, which distinguishes him from the other engravers of the fifteenth century, and which we shall again have occasion to remark, a little later, in his other works.

The result, therefore, of the information contained in this chapter is, that if, on the one hand, painting since the time of Masaccio has made rapid progress in external development, on the other it has ceased to be, for the greater number of artists, one of the forms of Christian poetry. To bring it back to its primitive purity, a revolution hitherto unexampled had to be effected in the minds, hearts, and even in the imaginations of the people. This enterprise, apparently so beyond human strength, was, nevertheless, attempted by a single individual, and that individual was a monk. But before we attempt to narrate the history of this great crisis, let us turn for repose to the consoling spectacle offered by the history of a school, superior to any other in the eminently mystical character of its productions, and the invariable purity of its inspirations.

CHAPTER VI.

Mystic School, what elements have concurred in its formation — Sienese and Florentine Artists who have belonged to this School; their common attraction towards the mountains of Umbria, on account of the Tomb of St. Francis of Assisi—History of Miniature Painting, from the time of Giotto until the end of the Fourteenth Century—Fra Angelico da Fiesole, and his disciple Benozzo Gozzoli.

At this point the sphere of those who are commonly called *connoisseurs* ceases, the particular faculty which applies itself to the appreciation of the kind of productions of which we are about to speak no longer being that by which ordinary works of art can be judged. Mysticism is to painting what ecstasy is to psychology—a definition which sufficiently explains how delicate are the materials we shall have to make use of in this part of our history. It is not sufficient to point out the origin and to follow the development of certain traditions which impress one common character, almost always easily recognised on works which have issued from the same school; it is further necessary to associate ourselves by a strong and profound sympathy to certain religious ideas, with which this artist in his studio, or that monk in his cell, have been more particularly pre-occupied, and to combine the results of this pre-occupation with the corresponding sentiments in the minds of their fellow-citizens. It is extremely difficult for us, who have not breathed

that atmosphere of Christian poetry in the midst of which the generations of that time lived, to fulfil this condition, and we generally pass with supercilious disdain before those miraculous paintings which have for several centuries exercised the most soothing influence over a multitude of human souls. We do not reflect, that this silent image of the Madonna and the infant Jesus has spoken a mysterious and consoling language to more than one heart pure and humble enough to comprehend it, and that there are perhaps no tears more precious in the sight of God than those which have watered the stones of these modest oratories. It is in the lives of the saints, rather than in the lives of the painters, that proofs of the interesting affinity between Religion and Art must be sought. San Bernardino of Siena went every day beyond the Porta Comollia, on the road to Florence, and there passed long hours in prayer before a Madonna, which he preferred to all the masterpieces exposed in the churches, and about which he delighted to hold converse with his cousin Tobias, who was the confidante of his pious enthusiasm.[1] The powerful influence which the work of an obscure artist exercised over the imagination of the young Bernardino; the preference given to it by him above all the other pictures offered to his veneration; the longing he experienced to pray there rather than elsewhere, and afterwards to pour his simple emotions into another pure and childlike heart, capable of participating in and comprehending them;—all this array of facts, which abound in the history of the saints, and

[1] *Life of the Saints*, by Simon Martin, t. i. p. 1261.

in that of the people, but which, by a kind of tacit agreement, are placed beyond the reach of common observation, are capable, nevertheless, of shedding at the same time a new charm and a new light on the hitherto sterile researches which have Christian art for their object. It is in exploring this mine, so fertile in psychological considerations of the highest order, that we shall find the explanation of the vicissitudes which certain works, universally admired in one century, and entirely forgotten in another, have experienced; and we shall understand why the lower orders, whom the connoisseur calls *superstitious* and *fanatic*, have alone remained faithful to the worship of those antiquated images, before which they kneel in the evening when their work is finished; why they alone remember to supply the little lamp with oil, and the tabernacle with flowers. He who approaches this study with the dispositions requisite to understand the *beautiful* in its most extensive acceptation, will only have to fear one danger, analogous to that to which the too-exclusive partisans of mystical lore are exposed,—he will run the risk of sacrificing more or less the other elements of the history of art, in order to breathe more freely the soft and wondrously varied perfume of popular devotion. A circumstance which occurred in one of my excursions in the lagunes of Venice, and the recollection of which is dearer to me than that of the magnificent monuments I most admired there, will serve to illustrate the importance which attaches to observations of this kind, particularly when they are accompanied by a mass of circumstances calculated to render them still more valuable. We were rowing, one beautiful spring morning, towards

the ruins of Torcello, when, on passing out of the canal which traverses the whole length of Murano, we perceived a small island covered with trees in full blossom, and shortly after a modest cottage, which was concealed behind them, met our view. Near the spot where our gondola touched we perceived a Madonna sculptured in the wall, with a lamp burning before her, flowers freshly gathered, and a purse suspended to a long pole to collect alms of the gondoliers and fishermen. In landing to visit the garden, we found an old man seated on the threshold of the door, and the gentleness of his voice and the serenity of his noble countenance having encouraged us to inquire into the kind of life which he led in this solitude, we learnt from him the most interesting details of his own history; of that of his island, formerly occupied by Franciscan monks, who had been driven from it by foreign invasion; and of the Madonna, which the profane hands of the French soldiers had vainly attempted to drag down from her tabernacle of stone—and he laid greater emphasis upon this last part of his recital than upon the rest. For more than twenty-five years he had lived almost constantly alone on this confined spot; and when we inquired if this solitary existence did not sometimes make him melancholy, he replied, with a smile of confidence accompanied by a very expressive gesture, in pointing to the Madonna, that, having always had the mother of God so near him, he had never felt his solitude; that the proximity of such a protectress was sufficient to make him happy; and that his sweetest occupation consisted in supplying the lamp and renewing the flowers before her image.

Assuredly, it was not the work of art alone that cheered the tedium of his voluntary exile, but its influence was necessary to sustain in him that sentiment of inward poetry which is the most enviable privilege of pure and simple souls. An analogous incident occurs in the history of the blessed Umiliana, who nourished her singular devotion for the holy Virgin by means of an image, which assisted the sublime flights of her soul, and before it she maintained a lamp, which, whenever it was extinguished, was rekindled either by an angel, or by a dove carrying in its beak a rose resplendent as the sun.[1] It was in this domestic sanctuary, consecrated by the miraculous presence of the Madonna, that the most interesting events of her life occurred: there it was that she experienced her prolonged ecstasies; there she poured forth her most consolatory prayers and tears; and when obliged, by cruel persecutions, to shut herself up in the stronghold of her family, this precious image was the only thing she carried away with her when she took refuge under the paternal roof.

The history of the saints is replete with analogous incidents, which show the intimate connexion that existed in the glorious centuries of Christian faith between art and those mysterious and exalted sentiments, which impart a kind of foretaste of celestial blessedness to the soul that experiences them. If this exaltation, far from being chimerical in its object or deplorable in its consequences, is, on the contrary, the seal of predestination, with which the most privileged among the elect on earth

[1] Brocchi, *Vite dei Fiorentini*, t. i. p. 205.

are provisionally marked by the Almighty, it is certain that painting becomes singularly enrolled by her intervention in this order of phenomena; that she then appears in her true light as the daughter of heaven; and that then alone she is raised to her highest power.

From hence it necessarily follows, that the artists who have best understood aspirations of this nature, and have been most successful in satisfying them, are also those who are entitled to occupy the highest ranks in the hierarchy, and who have more particularly merited the surname of *divine*. In the vast field open to their imagination and pencil they have made choice of that which promised inexhaustible resources and never-failing inspirations. If they have sometimes descended from the region of the ideal into that of living and material nature, it has not been to please themselves or to dwell there, but only to borrow forms and colours, which might serve at the same time as the limit and the partial manifestation of the infinite beauty of which they had enjoyed a faint glimpse. Although it has sometimes, and indeed very frequently, happened, that the combination of the form with the idea has not taken place in conformity to the laws of geometry, of optics, or good taste, the incomplete work which is the result of this transgression does not on that account lose all claim to our attention, and we are not the less bound to seek, under this repulsive exterior, the treasures of Christian poetry which lie hid beneath it.

If, during the whole of the fourteenth century, we have not had occasion to point out the qualities which essentially distinguish this school from every other, it

is because this distinction did not then exist. Naturalism, confined within the limits assigned to it by the instinct of Christian artists, had not as yet formed an independent domain; and paganism, having become entirely estranged from the recollections of the people, only reappeared at long intervals as a harmless phantom, whose presence was scarcely noticed.

But in the first half of the fifteenth century the Florentine school, forced more exclusively into a new direction by the influence of Masaccio and his disciples, set itself to work out naturalism in all its bearings with a success hitherto unknown, and for which it would not be just to make it alone responsible. At the same time, the increase of the public wealth, and of patrician vanity, the far from disinterested patronage of the Medici, sometimes also the popular favour, together with a multitude of other circumstances, unfortunately too seductive to the artists who had entered on this career, diminished every day, at least in Florence, the number of those who sought their inspirations at a higher source. Thus, it is not within the walls of this lettered capital that we must seek the elements of the mystic school; we shall find them, dispersed like so many odoriferous flowers on the surrounding hills, in the modest villages of Tuscany, in the little towns scattered along the sides of the Apennines, from Fiesole to Spoleto, but, above all, in the convents, which we must ever consider as the real sanctuaries of Christian painting. To discover the common source of all these various ramifications, and to group them together, notwithstanding the distance of the localities, so as to present to the reader one united

and distinct whole, is the task which still remains to be accomplished, in order to dispel the obscurity which surrounds this most interesting portion of the history of art.

The Sienese school had remained much longer faithful to the old traditions than that of Florence, as we may easily convince ourselves whenever an opportunity presents itself of comparing the productions of the one school with the other. Naturalism, in the sense under which it has hitherto been considered, did not penetrate there till about the end of the fifteenth century, at the time when Matteo di Giovanni, who has been called by some, without any sufficient reason, the Masaccio of the school of Siena, sought to make himself admired by his affectation in attempting to develope the muscles and veins of his figures. Among the artists who had preceded him, several may be distinguished who faithfully transmitted the doctrines of the preceding period, and by whom the traditional types were handled with respectful precaution, as if only to remove the Byzantine rust with which they were disfigured. The most illustrious of these artists are incontestably the two Bartolo, whose history commences with the fifteenth century, and whose influence extended far beyond the limits of their country.[1] Taddeo Bartolo, the first both in date and in importance, has left several works which show his veneration for traditional grouping in religious subjects, and the happy manner with which he tempered their ex-

[1] With regard to the date of the works of these two painters Vasari has committed several errors, which have been rectified by Rumohr, *Italienishe Forschungen*, vol. ii. p. 217, et suiv.

pression, at times too severe, by the display of profound feeling, gave a great charm to many of his compositions. An example of this may be seen in his picture of the Annunciation in the gallery of Siena, particularly in the figure of the Virgin, in which, although we perceive but little innovation as regards the fundamental type, is yet remarkable for the grace and life that distinguishes it, extending even to the accessories. The same may be said of all the Madonnas that remain to us,[1] a subject which he seems to have treated with peculiar predilection, especially in works of small dimensions. His largest composition is in one of the halls of the palace of the Republic, where he has painted various scenes in the life of the Virgin: this work is admirable for its force of expression, for the ideal character of the heads, and, above all, for the finish of the execution.[2] But he was less successful in the representation of the illustrious personages of antiquity, whom he enveloped in hideous draperies, which are no more Sienese than Greek or Roman. This task, so foreign and uncongenial to the habitual current of his imagination, required for its successful accomplishment talents of a more superficial and versatile order.

The works which he was commissioned to paint at Pisa, Padua, and Volterra, notwithstanding the formidable competition of the Florentine artists, are only

[1] I saw one of these Madonnas at Siena, in the collection of the Abbé de Angelis, and another in the collection of the King of Bavaria.

[2] I will cite more particularly the death of the Virgin, and the assumption: in the latter, Jesus Christ is seen descending in quest of his mother.

remarkable as a proof of the favour with which his pencil was regarded; whilst those he executed at Perugia are much more important, from the influence they exercised on the Umbrian school, in which the seeds of excellence sown by him sprang up and flourished a few years later. His charming picture, representing the Virgin surrounded by saints, with two angels at the foot of the throne, only disappeared a few years since from the refectory of the Franciscans; and I vainly sought in the church of San Domenico the history of St. Cecilia, which he painted in fresco, in one of the side-chapels.[1] But the loss of these two monuments, although much to be regretted, has not effaced all traces of his passage through Umbria. On the outside wall of the hospital of SS. Giacomo and Antonio, in the town of Assisi, is a Madonna placed between these two saints, with four pilgrims kneeling before her, the whole executed in a style which evidently proves it to be the work either of a disciple or an imitator of Taddeo Bartolo;[2] the same brown hue prevails in the flesh tints, and the resemblance is not less striking in the types of the principal figures, and even in the accessories. Pietro Antonio di Foligno, who painted a celebrated miracle of St. James of Compostella[3] in the adjoining chapel, was evidently under the

[1] See Vasari, *Vita di Taddeo Bartolo.*

[2] The name of the painter is effaced in the inscription, but the date (1422) still remains. On the opposite side is a mutilated Annunciation, which appears to be by the same hand, and beneath which is seen the name of Martinelli, with the same date.—See Rumohr, vol. ii. p. 912.

[3] It is the resurrection of a child whilst the parents were on a pilgrimage to Compostella. There is an Italian drawing of the fifteenth century on the same subject.

same influence, as well as under that of Benozzo Gozzoli,—another star, which shone forth in a different part of Tuscany, and contributed also to the formation of the crown of glory by which the arts encircled the tomb of St. Francis.

Benozzo Gozzoli was the cherished disciple of the blessed Fra Angelico da Fiesole; and this last, having kept himself quite distinct from the revolution which was at that time taking place in the Florentine school, had, in the silence of the cloister, matured and sanctified his talent on models free from all pagan innovation; namely, such as he found in the paintings of the ancient masters, and more particularly in the miniatures of the manuscripts and books of choral services,—inestimable treasures, which might long have kept alive spiritualism in art, if the artist had sought in these collections solemn, vivifying, inexhaustible inspirations, instead of those which he believed he had found in the observation of vulgar nature, or in the bas reliefs of antique monuments.

Miniature painting, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, had advanced in the same progressive manner as the other branches of art; and having never quitted the cloister, which indeed might be considered its natural home, it had retained, without difficulty, all the purity of its early inspirations. The kind of subjects generally treated by these mystical artists were marvellously adapted to their special vocation: they were the life of the holy Virgin, the principal festivals celebrated by the Church, or popular objects of devotion; in short, all the dogmas

which were susceptible of this mode of representation, works of mercy, the different sacraments, the imposing ceremonies of religion, and, in general, all that was most poetical in liturgy or legend. In compositions of so exclusive a character, naturalism could only be introduced in subordination to the religious element; and no opportunity whatever was afforded for the display of the costumes or architectural pomp of paganism. Thus the severity of monastic seclusion was as great a barrier against this twofold influence as against the worldly enjoyments of the period; and art, taken up regularly as an ascetic exercise in the calm of the cloister, became associated for the moment, according to the accidental occupation of the day, either to the past joys or sorrows of the Church, a commemoration of a martyrdom or miracle, an act of faith bearing on a particular dogma, a pilgrimage to some particular tomb or to Mount Calvary, or indeed a fervent prayer, accompanied by floods of tears, as Vasari relates of the blessed Angelico da Fiesole.

Here, as in the paintings of large dimensions, it was necessary to break through the Byzantine trammels,—a task rendered less difficult, as the decline of art was much more visible in these smaller productions; the traditional types, which were very carefully adhered to as regards the general form by the followers of this school, when they worked on a large scale, were scarcely to be recognised in the majority of the Greek manuscripts of the thirteenth century; and a manuscript in the Vatican library, containing a collection of passages from the

Fathers on the Book of Job, and ornamented by an artist of the island of Cyprus with a number of miniatures,[1] shows the manner in which this decrepit school treated historical compositions. In the fourteenth century the decline was still more apparent, and nothing can exceed the disgust excited by the paintings with which the manuscript of a translation, in the Sclavonic language, of the history of Constantine Manasses has been decorated.[2]

Moreover, the separation of the churches had singularly facilitated the separation of the two schools, on account of the continually increasing divergence in the liturgies, which generally furnished them with subjects for representations of this kind; so that miniature painting, freed from the three principal obstacles with which the secular branch of art had to contend, preserved, even in those places where naturalism was most in favour, a character at once pure and progressive.

Time has not spared any of the works of two artists who enjoyed a great celebrity as miniature painters in the fourteenth century, I allude to Oderigi d'Agobbio: who was the friend of Giotto, and who was much employed for the library of the Vatican, and Franco Bolognese, who worked also at the pontifical court, and left his rival far behind him. But if the fragile productions of their pencil have entirely disappeared, their memory has

[1] It is on the authority of Agincourt that I adopt for this manuscript the approximate date of the thirteenth century (see pl. 60). God appears in it under the anticipated form of the Redeemer.

[2] This translation was ordered to be made by John Alexander, king of the Bulgarians from 1330 to 1353.

received ample compensation in the flattering tribute which Dante has paid them in the eleventh canto of his "Purgatory."[1]

The art of miniature painting being peculiarly congenial to the monastic life, it was naturally preferred by those who sought to find in the silence of the cloister legitimate food for their imagination; and for this reason certain religious orders, such as the Dominicans and Camaldolesi, made a point of providing an asylum for those devoted to this branch of painting. Thus separated from the period, works of this kind soon became an entirely distinct branch of art, which accounts for those who were celebrated as miniature painters having rarely obtained the same renown for their larger compositions.

This portion of art had also its traditions, which were followed with greater severity than those of the secular schools; but as they have not been developed from a common centre, nor transmitted with the same regularity from one generation to another, it is not easy with the incomplete information we possess to establish on any historical foundation the generic relations which may exist in this multitude of monuments, particularly as from their dispersion in the different libraries of Europe they can only be superficially compared with each other.

[1] "O, dissi lui, non se' tu Oderisi
L'onor d'Agobbio, e l'onor di quell' arte,
Ch' alluminare è chiamata in Parisi?
Frate, diss' egli, più ridon le carte,
Che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese
L'onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte."

Nevertheless, there are some schools, which may justly be entitled indigenous: as that of Siena, undoubtedly the most ancient of all, if we except the centuries anterior to Giotto; the books of the Kaleffi and of the Leoni, which still exist in the archives of the republic, are ornamented with miniatures which date back to the first half of the fourteenth century, and which surpass in elegance and beauty all the productions of this kind belonging to the same period.[1] It is sufficient to see the frescos on the public edifices, and above all the old paintings on wood which are in the gallery, to have an idea how marvellously the Sienese genius was adapted to this particular branch of art, in which we do not expect to find the bold and grandiose designs of the Florentine school, but rather a bright and harmonious colouring, united to mysticism and *naïveté* of expression. In the works of the two brothers Lorenzetti, particularly those in which they have depicted episodes in the history of the Saints of the Desert, the miniature style so predominates that we could almost imagine we had before us leaves detached from some contemporaneous manuscript; and the same character also prevails, although in a less degree, in the productions of Taddeo Bartolo and his nephew Domenico,[2]

[1] These miniatures exist in the *Archivio delle Riformazionè*; the most remarkable is that by a certain *Nicolo di Sozzo*, who worked in 1334.

[2] The principal paintings by Domenico Bartolo are in the infirmary of the hospital della Scala. They represent the different acts of Christian charity, the marriage of the young orphans, the indulgence granted to the hospital by Celestin III., Saints, Patriarchs, Prophets, a scene from the life of the blessed Agostino Novello, &c.

of whom it may even be affirmed that they had pupils in Umbria who devoted themselves especially to this interesting branch of painting.[1]

The insignificance into which the school of Siena had fallen towards the end of the fifteenth century, does not seem to have extended to miniature painting, if we may judge from the miniatures with which Benedetto di Matera, a monk of Monte Casino, and Gabriele Mattei, a Sienese monk of the order of the Servites, have embellished the magnificent books of the choir, which may still be seen in the sacristy of the cathedral.[2] At the head of each *Introit* for every Sunday in the year there is a painting analogous to the commemoration of the day, and I much doubt if it be possible to find a collection of pictures which leave a more delightful and lasting impression on the mind of the Christian. Particularly admirable are the subjects which correspond to the days, at once mournful and consoling, of the Holy Week; to the festivals of the Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost, represented with all the poetry which could be expressed in such small compass: this admiration increases on looking over the volume which contains the procession of the Holy Sacrament, and reaches its height when we behold

[1] There is in the canonical library at Perugia a manuscript (No. 43) of the first half of the fifteenth century, of which the miniatures have been certainly painted under the influence of Taddeo Bartolo. Observe particularly, the Last Judgment and the Massacre of the Innocents.—Rumohr, vol. ii. p. 312.

[2] A portion of these books was taken away by the Cardinal of Bruges, and carried into Spain.

the three charming figures at the beginning of the service for the Virgin Martyrs.[1]

The monastery of Monte Casino, to which the co-adjutor of the Sienese Mattei belonged, had been, during the whole of the middle ages, richer than any other in monks who devoted themselves as much to the preservation and collection of the classic treasures of antiquity as to the study of art, in so far as it could be applied to the embellishment of manuscripts, to which they consecrated all their leisure hours. Thus no other monastic order has excited so much gratitude among the admirers of Greek and Latin literature as this; but their claim to the gratitude of the admirers of Christian art may justly be contested from two causes, which naturally influenced their works: first, the habitual study of compositions foreign to their faith; and secondly, the Byzantine style, which retained its hold on the south of Italy until a much later period. Notwithstanding these causes, several artists, no less happily inspired than Fra Benedetto di Matera, may be mentioned, who did honour to this illustrious colony; amongst others, the painter who has embellished with such charming miniatures a service for the Virgin, which is carefully preserved in the library of the convent.[2]

Monuments of this kind are almost as numerous and

[1] Some of these miniatures are very mediocre; for instance, that which is at the head of the service for Ash-Wednesday. In general the types are of the greatest beauty; for example, Christ rising from the Tomb, at the beginning of the third volume. The two volumes corresponding to the season of Lent, contain charming motives for religious pictures.

[2] These miniatures were executed in 1469.

magnificent at Ferrara as at Siena, although its collections have been at different times considerably impoverished. Formerly it could boast of possessing a series of miniatures, executed principally in the seclusion of its convents; from the time of the Benedictine monk Serrati, who in 1240 ornamented the books of the choir with figures of a most noble character,[1] till that of Fra Girolamo Fiorini, who towards the beginning of the fifteenth century devoted himself to the same occupation in the monastery of S. Bartolomeo, and formed in his young disciple Cosmè a successor who was destined to surpass his master, and to carry this branch of art to a degree of perfection till then unknown. Even at the present day we may see in the twenty-three volumes presented by the Bishop Bartolomeo della Rovere to the cathedral, and in the twenty-eight enormous volumes removed from the Certosa to the public library, how much reason the Ferrarese have to be proud of the possession of such treasures, and to place them by the side of the manuscripts of Tasso and Ariosto.

This immense collection of small religious pictures was completed towards the middle of the fifteenth century—a period coinciding with that when the Ultramontane artists astonished Italy by the perfection to which they brought works of this kind. The famous Breviary of Grimani, still in excellent preservation at Venice, with its rich binding, set in gold and precious stones, contains the most authentic and wonderful col-

[1] "Ornò i libri corali di figure nobillissimi."—Cittadella, *Catalogo dei Pittori e Scultori Ferraresi*, vol. i. p. 1–27.

lection of miniatures which have been produced by this foreign school. Memling of Bruges, Gerard of Ghent, and Livin of Antwerp, consecrated many years to this work; and the hand of the first may be easily recognised in all those masterpieces which, from the beauty of the types, the finish of the execution, the harmony and charm of the colouring, the brilliancy of the landscapes, the choice of the costumes and forms, recall so many of the magnificent compositions of this artist dispersed in the different galleries of Germany, and in the principal cities of Belgium.[1] But I return to the Florentine school.

The Camaldolesi of the monastery of the Angeli, near Florence, had shown from the commencement of this institution a very decided predilection for the arts of design; and as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century great efforts were made to obtain their works, which were highly appreciated and sought for by the whole of Italy. The most celebrated among these secluded artists, Don Sylvestro and Don Giacomo Fiorentino, united their talents and patience to endow the convent,

[1] The name of the three artists who worked on this breviary is found in *Le Notize dell' Anomino, decimo sesto*, published for the first time in 1800 by Morelli, at Bassano, in 8vo.—(See page 78, and note 139.) The miniatures which represent the twelve months of the year, with the occupations belonging to each season, are particularly remarkable for poetry and truth in their details; these are evidently by Memling. Gerard of Ghent is probably the same as Gerard Van der Meir, of whom Descamps speaks, (t. i. p. 15), who does not name any important work by him. As to Livin of Antwerp, he is nowhere mentioned. (This artist is mentioned by Kugler as one of the scholars of Memling.—*Translator's note.*)

which had been their dearest possession on earth, with the most magnificent choral books that had ever yet appeared. Of the twenty enormous volumes left by them as an inheritance to the brotherhood, and which were so much admired by Lorenzo the Magnificent and Leo X., only one is preserved in the Laurentian library; but this single relic is sufficient to justify their admiration, and the favour enjoyed by the works of these two monks even beyond the limits of Tuscany, more particularly at Rome and Venice,[1] as well as the enthusiasm of Vasari in speaking of them,[2] and the veneration in which the Camaldolesi of the Angeli held the right-hand of Don Giacomo Fiorentino, preserved by them as a relic in a tabernacle of their convent.[3] Don Lorenzo made his appearance half a century later; he conformed himself faithfully to the traditions transmitted by his pious predecessors, and decorated with religious paintings the convent where he had served his double noviciate of monk and artist, as well as the other houses belonging to the same order at Florence and Pisa, his favourite subject being the coronation of the Virgin. Don Bartolomeo, who was afterwards abbot of S. Clemente at Arezzo, reflected still greater renown on the

[1] St. Peter's at Rome formerly possessed two choral books, copied and painted by them; there were also some at Venice in the convent of the Camaldolesi, in the island of S. Michele, close to Murano.—Vasari, *Vita di Don Lorenzo.*

[2] It is said that there has never been in Italy, nor even in Europe, an artist comparable to Giacomo Fiorentino for the design and ornamentation of capital letters.—*Ibid.*

[3] Vasari, *ibid.*

monastery of the Angeli, where he long successfully employed himself in miniature painting,[1] till at length having one day, at the time of the plague of 1468, ventured to paint a St. Roch on a large scale, he succeeded so well in this first attempt, that henceforth he renounced entirely the kind of painting which till then he had cultivated: but he continued faithful to his first inspirations, gratifying the devotional taste of his countrymen by the constant production of religious pictures, and only availing himself of the monopoly he enjoyed from their confidence in him to confirm them still more in their natural predilection for everything that tended to excite sentiments of piety. He was thought worthy of being employed with Perugino in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, and the impossibility of distinguishing what belongs to each of them in the compartment which they painted together,[2] proves better than anything else how well he deserves to be ranked among the artists of the mystic school.

For the rest it may be said, that after him the ancient renown of the monastery of the Angeli began to be eclipsed in the history of art; and by a coincidence which can scarcely be considered accidental, this decline took place immediately after the discontinuance of the

[1] Vasari speaks of the miniatures which Don Bartolomeo executed for the abbey of Arezzo, for the cathedral of Lucca, and for Pope Sixtus IV. It is probable that the *Pontifical* of the library Ottoboni, now in the library of the Vatican, and which Agincourt attributes to Perugino, is a work of Don Bartolomeo. There are twenty-five miniatures, which in execution can hardly be surpassed.

[2] It is the one in which Christ is represented giving the keys to St Peter.

strict and perpetual seclusion to which the monks were subject until the year 1470.

Notwithstanding the silence of Vasari on the greater part of the miniature painters who flourished at this period, either in the monasteries or in the secular schools of Florence and some other cities of Tuscany, it may be conjectured, from the multitude of works of this kind executed for missals and choral books, as well as for manuscripts of classic authors and national poets, that the number of artists who cultivated painting in connexion with caligraphy was never so considerable as towards the middle of the fifteenth century. The King of Hungary (Matthias Corvinus [1]), maintained alone as many as thirty, of whom the most celebrated were Gherardo and Atavante, both Florentines. The fertility of the pencil of the first was quite astonishing; for, besides the number of the works he sent into foreign countries, he ornamented *an infinity of books*[2] with miniatures for the hospital of Sta. Maria, and even for the cathedral, not to speak of his altar-pictures, his frescos, his works in mosaic executed under the direction of Domenico Ghirlandajo, and the passion which seized him for reproducing the engravings of Martin Schoen and Albert Durer when they first fell into his hands.[3]

His rival, Atavante, was less universal; but the works which remain by him in the library of the Vatican, and in that of St. Mark at Venice, suffice to place him among

[1] The library which Matthias Corvinus had collected together at Buda amounted to 50,000 volumes; it was pillaged by the Turks in 1527.

[2] *Un' infinità di libri.*—Vasari, *Vita di Gherardo.*

[3] Vasari, *ibid.*

the illustrious artists of his time; and they are more valuable, because, even in the time of Vasari, his works were considered extremely rare.[1] It is, however, important not to confound the school to which he belonged with those which produced the miniatures, from whence some of the mystic painters of the fifteenth century drew their most fertile inspirations. Atavante executed, at least, as many pagan as religious works; and although there is no positive document to prove that Gherardo or his pupil Stefano are open to the same reproach,[2] there is every

[1] The only work of Atavante known to Vasari was a *Silius Italicus*, embellished with rich miniatures of the greatest beauty; the details of these he has described at some length. (V. *Vita di Fra Giov. Angelico*, last pages.) Unfortunately, it has been discovered since that these paintings were not by Atavante, and that Vasari was led into this error by his correspondent Bartoli.—See Morelli, *Notizie di Opere di disegno*.

In a work of Marcianus Capella (whose name is inscribed at the commencement of the volume), Atavante has executed in the most elaborate manner several subjects analogous to the contents: for example, the Seven Polite Arts, the Council of the Gods, &c.; the arabesques and flowers are superior to all the other parts.

[2] This Stefano abandoned miniature painting in order to devote himself entirely to architecture, and left his sketches, books, and other materials, to the elder Boccardino, who painted the greater part of the books in the Badia of Florence. (Vasari, *Vita di Gherardo*.) It seems useless to hazard conjectures on the miniatures of the different manuscripts in the Vatican, which belong to the fifteenth century, and in which the Florentine style may be recognised. The Bible of Matthias Corvinus, which Agincourt is tempted to attribute to Gherardo (see the Pl. 79), was not painted till 1492; that is to say, more than twenty years after the epoch at which this artist flourished, according to Vasari. The same uncertainty prevails with regard to the large Latin Bible, the first volume of which contains several admirable miniatures, evidently Florentine, whilst those in the second volume are very inferior, although belonging to the same school. As to those which ornament the manuscript of the Divine Comedy, they are neither worthy of the poem nor of the exaggerated reputation they have acquired.

reason to suspect that they were strongly imbued with the naturalism of Ghirlandajo, and that their enthusiasm for Albert Durer was not favourable to a return to idealism. They have, therefore, been mentioned in this chapter, not so much because they embodied in their works doctrines intimately allied to that lyrical and mystical school, the greatest ornament of which was undoubtedly Fra beato Angelico, but rather because our rapid *aperçu* of this branch of painting could hardly be considered as complete without them.

"Fra Angelico," says Vasari, "might have led a very "happy life in the world; but being anxious, above all, "for the salvation of his soul, he embraced the monastic "life, and entered the order of the Domenicans, without, "however, renouncing his no less decided vocation for "painting—thus combining the care of his eternal interests "with the acquisition of an immortal name among men."[1]

One very remarkable circumstance in the history of this incomparable artist, is the influence he acquired over his biographer Vasari, who lived in an age when very little enthusiasm was felt for mystical paintings; and yet, in his account of those by Fra Angelico, he appears to have emancipated himself from all contemporaneous prejudices in order to celebrate, in accents of fervent admiration, the sublime virtues which adorned his soul, and the innumerable masterpieces produced by his pencil. In the fervour of his momentary conversion he goes so far as to say, that so elevated and extraordinary a genius as Fra Angelico possessed could only be vouchsafed

[1] . . . . . *Acquitarsi ridendo santamentè il regno celeste, e virtuosamentè operando eterna fama nel mondo.*

to one of pre-eminent holiness: and that in order to succeed in the representation of holy and religious subjects, it was necessary that the artist should be holy and religious himself.[1]

This superiority, to which Vasari pays such flattering homage, did not consist, however, either in perfection of design, relief of the figures, or in truth of detail; the arrangement of the subject is never assisted by a skilful distribution of light and shade, as in the frescos of Masaccio; and that which must appear a more unpardonable fault in the eyes of many is, that the life-like expression which abounds in the heads, and is sustained in the upper parts of the figures, diminishes in the lower limbs, so that they have all the stiffness of artificial supports. But we must, indeed, be very insensible to all the delicious emotions which Christian art excites in souls susceptible of its influence, if we can allow ourselves to criticise minutely the technical imperfections of this divine pencil—imperfections which, after all, were much less owing to any feebleness of execution in the artist, than to his indifference for everything which was foreign to the transcendental aim with which his pious imagination was preoccupied.

The compunction of the heart, its aspirations towards God, ecstatic raptures, the foretaste of celestial bliss—in short, all those profound and exalted emotions, which no artist can express without having previously expe-

[1] *Non potera e non dovera discendere una somma e straordinaria virtù, come fu quella di Fra Giovanni, se non in uomo di santissima vita; perciochè devono coloro che in cose ecclesiastiche e sante s'adoperano essere ecclesiastici e santi uomini.*

rienced them, formed, as it were, a mysterious cycle for the exercise of the genius of Fra Angelico, and afforded him never-failing delight.' In works of this kind he appears to have exhausted every combination and shade of distinction, in so far at least as they relate to quantity and quality of expression; and if we examine, however slightly, certain pictures in which a wearisome monotony appears to prevail, we shall discover in them a wonderful variety, embracing all the poetry which the human countenance is capable of expressing. It is especially in the Coronation of the Virgin,[1] surrounded by angels and the celestial hierarchy; in the representation of the Last Judgment—that part of it, at least, which relates to the elect; and in that of Paradise, the extreme limit of the arts of imitation;—it is in these mystical subjects, so perfectly in unison with the vague but infallible presentiments of his soul, that he has so profusely displayed the inexhaustible riches of his imagination. It may be said, that painting with him served as a formulary to express the emotions of faith, hope, and charity. In order that his task might not be unworthy of Him in whose sight it was undertaken, he always implored the blessing of Heaven before he began his work; and when an inward feeling told him that his prayer was answered, he considered himself no longer at liberty to deviate in the slightest degree from the inspiration vouchsafed him from on high, persuaded that in this, as in everything else, he was only an

[1] The frontispiece is taken from the celebrated Coronation in S. Marco with this only difference, that in the original there are six kneeling figures of saints, two of which have been omitted, as the size of the page did not admit of their being introduced.—*Translator's note.*

instrument in the hand of God.[1] Every time that he painted Christ on the cross, tears flowed as abundantly from his eyes as if he had assisted on Calvary at this last scene of the passion; and it is to this sympathy, so real and profound, that we must attribute the pathetic expression he has imparted to the different personages who are witnesses of the crucifixion, of the taking down from the cross, or of the entombment.[2]

Although a great part of his works have been dispersed in the galleries of Europe, enough still remain in Florence, both of large and small dimensions, to supply constant food to the admiration of travellers. The convent of San Marco, one of the richest in the world in glorious recollections, holds that of Fra beato Angelico in peculiar veneration, as also the magnificent frescos, with which he decorated the walls of the corridors and convent;[3] but we search in vain for the choral books which he and his eldest brother embellished with miniatures, and of which Vasari says he has no words to express his admiration. Those he executed for S. Domenico of Fiesole have disappeared, together with the other marvels of art with which he enriched this church, and in the execution of which he was still more happily inspired, not only by his love for his order, but by his

[1] Vasari, *ibid.*

[2] In the collection of the academy of the belle Arti at Florence there are two rather large pictures of this class: in the first, Joseph of Arimathea shows to another personage the bloody nails which have pierced the feet and hands of Jesus Christ. This silent act tells more than the most eloquent tirade of Klopstock.

[3] *Tanto belli, che non si puo dir più.*

love for his native hill.[1] We must, therefore, seek elsewhere for proofs of his superiority as a miniature painter over all the artists of his time, at least as regarded the representation of mystical subjects. Besides the fragments so carefully preserved in the collection of the academy of the belle Arti, and in the gallery of the Grand Duke,[2] we may see in Santa Maria Novella, another convent belonging to the Domenicans at Florence, the two reliquaries, which Vasari says were painted by Fra Angelico at the same time as the Easter Candle; and in the absence of these more distant treasures which are not accessible to all his admirers, the most exigeant imagination may rest completely satisfied with the sight of the chef-d'œuvre possessed by France, and of which Italy herself may justly envy us the possession.

The only work which surpasses that of which I have just spoken—I do not say in beauty, because that is im-

[1] On the *predella*, and on the tabernacle of the high altar, says Vasari, there is a Glory with a number of small figures, so finely executed that they appear to belong to Paradise; and we can never gaze enough at them.

In one of the chapels is an Annunciation, of which it might be said that it had been painted in heaven. . . . . But the work in which the artist has surpassed himself is a Coronation of the Virgin, which could only have been executed by an angel or a saint. . . . . All these common-place expressions, which Vasari was constantly repeating, are, nevertheless, very significant, particularly when he speaks from his own observation.

[2] Here may be seen: 1st. The life of Jesus Christ, in a series of small pictures, which are so many charming miniatures; 2ndly. A Last Judgment, which affords a striking example of the artist's skill in expressing the beatitude of the elect; 3rdly. St. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus surrounded by their disciples, on whose countenances attention and humble conviction are admirably expressed.

possible, but in size, and perhaps in historical importance—is the large fresco in the Vatican, in which Fra Angelico, summoned to Rome by Eugenius IV., has represented in six compartments the principal events in the history of St. Laurence and St. Stephen—thus uniting these two Christian heroes in the same poetical commemoration, as it has been customary to unite them in the invocations offered by the faithful from the time their ashes were deposited in the same tomb in the ancient basilica of San Lorenzo without the walls.

The Consecration of St. Stephen, the Distribution of Alms, and, above all, his Preaching, are three pictures as perfect of their kind as any that have been produced by the greatest masters, and it would be difficult to imagine a group more happily conceived as to arrangement, or more graceful in form and attitude, than that of the seated females listening to the holy preacher; and if the furious fanaticism of the executioners, who stone him to death, is not expressed with all the energy we could desire, this may be attributed to a glorious incapacity in this angelic imagination, too exclusively occupied with love and ecstasy to be ever able to familiarise itself with those dramatic scenes in which hateful and violent passions were to be represented.

The figures are draped with no less dignity than elegance, and this kind of merit, common to the works of Fra Angelico, is the more striking in the work before us, in consequence of the exact observance of the costume, which he has copied from the monuments of the primitive Church. This imitation is not so exact in the lower

compartments, in which the artist, in other respects no less happily inspired, has represented analogous scenes in the life of St. Laurence.[1]

Although these admirable paintings are contiguous to the famous Stanze painted by Raphael, they do not on that account the less excite the enthusiasm of all true admirers of Christian art: it was not, however, this work, so simple, so pure, so free from all pagan alloy, so superior to everything that Ghirlandajo and Botticelli executed in the Sistine chapel, which made the deepest impression on Pope Eugenius. While he paid his tribute of admiration to these wonderful productions, he at the same time perceived that the soul of the artist was still more to be prized than his pencil; and the archbishopric of Florence becoming vacant at this time, the idea of presenting it to him immediately occurred to his mind. Alarmed by this proposal, so repugnant to his humility, Fra Angelico had recourse to the most earnest entreaties that a burden might not be imposed on his timid conscience, which, even in anticipation, seemed to overwhelm him; and it was in consequence of the praise bestowed by him on this occasion on Fra Antonio, that the latter, known afterwards in the Church by the name of St. Antonio, was made Archbishop of Florence by Nicholas V.

On his return to Florence, Fra Angelico left some traces of his pencil in his passage through Umbria; and as these precious seeds were destined at a later period to

[1] See Agincourt, pl. 145.

spring up and bear fruit, the small pictures which he painted for the church of San Domenico at Perugia acquire, in the history of art, an importance which must not be measured by their dimensions.[1]

Benozzo Gozzoli, the favourite disciple of Fra Angelico, exercised considerable influence over the Umbrian school; and those of his works which bear the closest resemblance to the angelic purity of his master were also those which exercised the greatest influence over this school, as may be seen in the frescos with which, a few years before the death of Fra Angelico, he decorated the churches of San Fortunato and San Francesco in the little town of Montefalco. Here again we have the favourite subjects of the mystic painters,—a Madonna adoring the infant Christ, the usual cycle of the history of the Virgin, and some scenes in the life of St. Francis, in the representation of which the resemblance between the master and pupil is more striking than in any other part, especially in the figure of the saint, which is a copy of that in the chapter of the convent of San Marco at Florence.[2] Another picture by Benozzo, preserved in the gallery of Perugia, and painted only one year after

[1] Two of these small pictures are now in the Vatican, and represent several incidents in the life of St. Nicholas, executed with all the pious *naïveté* which characterises the author. The third is mentioned in the *Guida di Perugia* by Constantino Constantini, 1784.

[2] Rumohr is the first who has rescued these works of Benozzo Gozzoli from the oblivion to which they had been consigned from the ignorance or indifference of Vasari, who makes no mention of them; but he is mistaken in calling them his earliest works, for Benozzo was more than fifty when he executed those in the church of San Francesco, which bear the date of 1452. Benozzo was born in the first year of the century, and was therefore seventy-eight when he died at Pisa, in 1478.—Vasari, *Vita di Benozzo.*

the death of Fra Angelico,[1] is still strongly impressed with reminiscences of the same kind, although the individuality of his pencil becomes more and more evident; and this was apparently the last legacy he bequeathed to the Umbrian painters, the predestined heirs of the rich fruits of a genius which had been cultivated by the hand, and ripened under the auspices of Fra beato Angelico.

On quitting the pure and vivifying air of the mountains, Benozzo appears to have in some measure lost his inspirations; for the series of works he executed at San Gimignano, from 1464 to 1467, are not only without the indefinable charm which pervades his compositions at Montefalco, but in certain points, as in the death of St. Sebastian, he did not even rise above mediocrity.[2] It is only in the figures of the angels that he retained his original superiority; and it may be said that, during the whole course of his career, he scarcely ever deviated on this point from the mystical traditions of which he was the depositary.

The only important work by him preserved at Florence, is the large fresco in the chapel of the Riccardi palace, where he has represented the Magi coming in great pomp to worship the infant Christ in the manger. Among their numerous suite we find heads full of

[1] It bears the date of 1456, and Vasari says that Fra Angelico died in 1455.

[2] The St. Sebastian was painted in 1465, and is in the cathedral. The paintings he executed in 1464 are in the church of the Augustins, and are very superior to those of the following years.—See Rumohr, vol. ii. p. 259.

All these, if we may believe Vasari, were executed *quando Benozzo era Giovanetto.*

expression and truth, and the pose of some of the figures on horseback is so fine that we may almost venture to compare them to the bas-reliefs on the Parthenon.

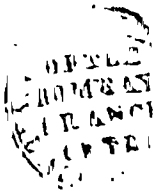
It does not appear that Benozzo executed any other work for the Medici family; his productions were, probably, too exclusively Christian to inspire them with much enthusiasm. Florence, also, seems to have had very little attraction for him after the death of his master; for in following the dates on his pictures we find him established during several years at San Gimignano, and subsequently seeking at Pisa an asylum for his declining years, far removed from those boisterous and bitter rivalries which distracted the Florentine schools. It was there that the last germs of piety which the Beato Angelico implanted in his heart were developed. It was in a retreat peculiarly favourable to a poetical imagination which feels conscious of the decline of its vigour, without renouncing on that account the objects of its enthusiasm—amongst monuments impressed with an indescribable mixture of grandeur and sadness, and surrounded by memorials of national and Christian glory, which excite such delicious emotions in exalted imaginations, that Benozzo found the last ten years of his life pass quickly, divided between the practice of his art and the exercise of Christian virtues. The immense work he executed in the Campo Santo, and which embraces the history of the Old Testament, from Noah to the time of Solomon, represented in twenty-four large compartments, nearly all in good preservation, must be considered, both as regards poetical merit and

dimensions, as one of the most astonishing marvels of art; and Vasari has justly remarked, that this gigantic undertaking might well alarm a whole legion of painters. Never have imposing or pastoral scenes been so happily represented by any artist; in order to succeed in them, a mixture of grandeur and simplicity was required, which the naturalisti school of Florence was quite unable to reach; and this want of power was still more fatally developed in the succeeding generation. In the fourteenth century several attempts had been made, which might have been successful if the methods of technical execution had been better understood. Benozzo alone had the privilege of uniting this last advantage to the naive and grand inspirations of the early masters; and it is on this account, perhaps, that no one has left, at least on so large a scale, a more perfect model of the *patriarchal* style—the most difficult of any, if we may judge from the very small number of painters who have excelled in it.[1]

[1] Those who are never contented without criticising will find some inaccuracies in the drawing, which was, in fact, the weak point of Benozzo and his school. The most striking progress is in the countenances and airs of the heads. We may also remark a charm in his landscapes and a profusion of architectural ornaments, not to be found in his earlier works.

The Pisans, anxious that his last work should serve as an ornament for his tomb, have deposited his remains beneath the compartment on which he has represented the touching scene of Joseph recognised by his brethren.

If the reader feels any curiosity to see specimens of Benozzo's work in the Campo Santo at Pisa, he cannot do better than consult W. Y. Ottley's beautiful work on the early Florentine school.—*Translator's note.*



CHAPTER VII.

The Mystic School takes root in Umbria—Gentile da Fabriano, Niccolo di Foligno, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo—Perugino, his influence on the Schools of Siena, Naples, Cremona, Florence, and Bologna—Eminently mystical Character of the Bolognese Artists in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—Short Duration of the School of Francia—Fertility and unexampled Perfection of that of Perugino—Paris Alfani, Gerino da Pistoja, Luigi d'Assisi, Pinturicchio, and lastly Raphael, whose later works do not belong to the Mystic School.

ANOTHER pupil of Fra beato Angelico, Gentile da Fabriano, a true missionary of art, not only extended his own and his master's influence from Venice to the kingdom of Naples,[1] but left innumerable works dispersed throughout the neighbourhood of Fabriano, his native country, in the duchy of Urbino, and in almost all the cities of Umbria.[2] It was said by Michael Angelo that the paintings of this artist coincided admirably with the name he bore; and although this praise may be rather ambiguous, it serves to confirm Lanzi's conjecture, who believes him to have been the pupil of a miniature painter;[3] thus no doubt exists with regard to the school

[1] He worked at Bari, Orvieto, Siena, Florence, Brescia, Venice, and Rome, but more particularly in the Umbrian cities. See Vasari, *Vita di Gentile da Fabriano;* Facio, *De Viris illustribus*, p. 44; and Morelli, *Notizie di Opere di disegno*, p. 187. It is astonishing that Rumohr, who has made such learned researches into the history of the Umbrian school, should have omitted Gentile da Fabriano.

[2] *Fece infiniti lavori nella marcha, etc.*—Vasari, *ibid.*

[3] He thinks that Fra Angelico was his fellow-disciple and not his master.—See *Storia Pittorica*, lib. iii. *epoca prima.*

to which he belonged, and still less with regard to the manner in which his talent developed itself when he was free to choose his own path.

The universal admiration which Gentile da Fabriano excited at a period when the early schools began to lose their popularity, is a very consoling episode in the history of art. It is a proof that mystical painting was still perfectly appreciated in Italy, and was sure to command more rapturous applause than the mere imitation of nature. At Orvieto, which still possesses one of the most graceful productions of his pencil, he was honoured in the archives of the cathedral with the title of the *Master of masters.*[1] At Venice he was thought worthy to receive a gold ducat daily for his services, with the privilege of wearing the habit of a senator; and the modest church of a village adjoining his native city having been decorated with a picture by his hand, was transformed into a place of pilgrimage, and became the resort of the most famous painters, among whom the local tradition has included Raphael himself. But the most flattering homage of all was that which he received from Roger of Bruges, who coming to Rome on the occasion of the Jubilee, perceived, on entering the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Gentile's last work, and was so transported with admiration, that, on being informed of the author's name, he proclaimed him to be the first painter in Italy.[2]

[1] Lanzi, *ibid.*

[2] Facio, *De Viris illustribus*, p. 44.—This painting, which has long since perished, represented the history of John the Baptist, and also five prophets, which the artist, unexpectedly cut off by death, had not time to compiete.

By a singular fatality, all the paintings executed by him at Rome and Venice have either disappeared or have been removed from the situations they occupied in his lifetime, so that the Italian painter who, next to Giotto, has probably exercised the greatest influence on art, is much less known than Lorenzo Bicci, Andrea del Castagno, and many others, whose names might have been buried in oblivion without their absence being ever perceived in the history of art. It is only in the neighbourhood of Fabriano that the works of Gentile have been religiously preserved, and these would be sufficient, even in the absence of historical evidence, to prove him to be the happy link which connects Fra Angelico da Fiesole with the Umbrian school; but as Agobbio, Urbino, and Città di Castello do not lie in the ordinary route of the traveller, his name is almost always classed with those which we do not care to recollect.

I vainly sought to discover in the church of San Dominico at Perugia, the beautiful picture of which Vasari speaks with praise, and which must have exercised an immediate and lasting influence on the generation of artists who prepared the way for Raphael; for it is natural to suppose that those who, even at a distance, attached such importance to the works of Gentile da Fabriano as to go and seek them out in the villages which adjoined that city, would not neglect to avail themselves of the opportunity of gaining inspiration from a work placed constantly before their eyes, and which certainly equalled the most graceful productions of this artist.

Here, then, we see all the scattered elements of this

interesting school united round a common centre, and provided with every condition of vitality which might enable it to wrestle successfully with its most flourishing rivals. Little colonies, from Siena and Florence, had taken root there almost imperceptibly from time to time, and these seeds scattered around the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi, and there preserved from the taint of a worldly atmosphere, were cultivated by the hand of Perugino and Raphael, and perfumed the surrounding mountains and valleys with their odours.

Having thus traced the traditions which have converged towards this central point up to their original source, we find ourselves brought back, after a somewhat long digression, to the leading fact which we have taken so much pains to establish; namely, the influence exercised by Taddeo Bartolo, Benozzo Gozzoli, and his master, on the artists of Umbria in the fifteenth century, among whom we have as yet only mentioned Pietro Antonio di Foligno.

The works of Niccolo di Foligno,[1] which are too little known, are no less striking in their resemblance to those of Taddeo Bartolo, and the Madonna painted by him on the banner of the Confraternità dell'Annunziata at Perugia is a proof of the success with which he imitated the Sienese master, particularly in the beauty of the forms and purity of expression in the figure of the Virgin.[2] In his later compositions, although he has borrowed his inspirations from a foreign school, we perceive

[1] This painter is commonly called Niccolo Alunno.—*Translator's Note.*

[2] This banner is in the church of Santa Maria Nuova, and bears the date of 1466; all the other pictures by the same painter are of a later date.

that he has worked them out for himself, and assimilated them with all the energy of a poet who feels himself gifted with the power to create. He seems principally to have devoted himself to represent, with as much intensity as the means and limits of his art allowed, the inexpressible anguish felt at the death of Christ by his mother, his disciples, and even by the holy angels. The picture which is in the village of La Bastia, between Assisi and Perugia, would be alone a sufficient proof of the superiority of Niccolo di Foligno as an elegiac and pathetic painter; but that in the church of Assisi with the group of weeping angels, so much admired by Vasari, and which he defied the first masters of art to surpass in expression, appears to have been the finest work of this master, and the fragments which still remain of it in this basilica do not leave a doubt that the whole work was worthy both of the praises of which it has been the object, and of the profound mysticism of the school to which it belonged.

Apparently, he took Taddeo Bartolo for his model in the choice of his types and in the tone of his colours, while he imitated Fra Angelico when he attempted to express the lively and profound affections of the soul. This combination was in his case strictly original, and must not be confounded with eclecticism, the effects of which, both on painting and on philosophy, have been so deplorable.

Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, the contemporary of Niccolo and of Fra Angelico's two most celebrated disciples, appears to have preferred adopting the light colouring of Benozzo Gozzoli, and several other points of re-

semblance which a careful comparison of their works discloses, among others, a certain delicacy in the corners of the mouth, transforms this conjecture into certainty. On the other hand, it is no less evident that he has prepared the way for Perugino;[1] so that by the help of this analogy, which has nothing arbitrary in it, we are rendered independent of the disdainful silence of Vasari with regard to this painter. There exists in the sacristy of San Francesco at Perugia an old and mutilated picture, on which Fiorenzo's name is inscribed,[2] and which might easily be mistaken, from the head of the Madonna, the arrangement of the hands, and the character of the small accessory figures, for an early work of Perugino's. Why, therefore, should not the author of this *peruginesque* composition be considered as the master of this great painter, rather than Buonfiglio? An artist in whose behalf his countrymen have indulged in such absurdly exaggerated and metaphorical expressions, and have even held him up to public admiration as the first who had an insight into the principles of modern good taste[3]—he who had scarcely anything in common with the Umbrian school, and who, in a picture painted for the church of San Dominico, introduced his sister, his nephew, and his brother, as the holy Virgin, the infant Christ, and the youngest of the three kings.[4]

Others have asserted, with quite as little foundation,

[1] Rumohr, vol. ii. p. 320–324.

[2] With the date 1487.

[3] *Il primo tra gli antichi che abbia cominciato a dare qualche lume al moderno buon gusto.*—Pascoli, *Vita dei Pittori, Scultori, ed Architetti Perugini*, p. 21.

[4] *Guida di Perugia, di Costantino Costantini*, p. 65.

that Perugino not only studied under Pietro Borghese,[1] but acquired from him the design, colouring, and effects of perspective, so much admired by the Florentines. This filiation is not even supported on the slightest local tradition, and is still more chimerical than his supposed connexion with Buonfiglio; for the works of Pietro Borghese, those at least most praised by Vasari, seem to have been much more remarkable for the learned application of the laws of geometry and for skill in foreshortening, than for any great intensity of poetical expression; and if respect for Lanzi's authority should make us hesitate to receive this internal evidence, it would be easy to apply a chronological argument which is unanswerable; —it is, that Perugino was only twelve years old at the period that Pietro Borghese lost the use of his sight.[2]

These incompatibilities do not exist in the case of Fiorenzo, and still less in that of Niccolo di Foligno, whose works are more particularly stamped with that mystical exaltation which it is as difficult to define as to imitate. To justify us in asserting him to be the master of Perugino, in preference to any other artist, we have not only the authority of Mariotti, who, in his *Lettere perugine*,[3]

[1] The name of Borghese was given him from Borgo-San-Sepolcro, his birthplace: he is better known under the name of *Piero della Francesca*. He wrote much on geometry and perspective, in which he excelled. He worked at Rome, Ferrara, Loretto, and Perugia; but his finest work was the history of the Holy Cross, which he painted for the Franciscans at Perugia.—Vasari, *Vita di Piero della Francesca*.

[2] See Dati's *Notes on Lanzi*, book iii.—*Scuola romana; epoca prima.*

[3] Lettere perugine. *Non e niente improbabile che il nostro pittore prendesse qualche lume dal pittor Fuligmate · bedando altresi allo stile delle sue pitture, quale rassomiglia assai al primo stile di Pietro.*—Lett. v. p. 128.

after having balanced the contending opinions, ends by declaring himself in favour of Niccolo di Foligno, in consequence of the resemblance of the styles; but also the much more imposing authority of a local tradition, so firmly rooted in the minds of the inhabitants of Foligno, that the most pedantic scepticism would hardly venture to dispute it.[1]

Unfortunately, this is not the only point on which the admirers of Perugino are liable to be misled by the ignorance and partiality of Vasari, who represents him during his residence at Florence as living in extreme misery, working day and night for a livelihood, and continually haunted with the phantom of poverty, which made him brave hunger, cold, fatigue, and even shame itself.[2] In a word, he has represented the master of Raphael as a low and despicable speculator, who made gold his idol, *and who would have been capable of anything for money.*[3] And as if these accusations were not sufficiently dishonouring, he charges him with irreligion and disbelief in the immortality of the soul; and this accusation obtained such credit afterwards, that not only does Salvator Rosa mention it in his satires,[4] but it has actually become a sort of local tradition, an oak in the neighbourhood of Fontignano having long been pointed out as the spot where he was interred, in consequence of his refusal to receive the last sacraments of the

[1] Rumohr, vol. ii. p. 322–324.

[2] *Non si curo mai di freddo, di fame di fatica,* nè di vergogna.—Vasari, *Vita di Perugino.*

[3] *Aveva ogni sua speranza nei beni della fortuna, e per danari avrebbe fatto ogni mal contratto.—Ibid.*

[4] See his Third Satire.

Church.[1] To whatever credit a poet, and still more a popular legend, may be entitled, this pretended refusal of Christian burial is after all a mere fable, and has been triumphantly refuted by the author of the *Lettere perugine*, who cites the contract entered into between the Augustinians of Perugia and the sons of Perugino for the transportation of his body to their church. The reason why this ceremony did not take place immediately after the death of Perugino was, that a contagious malady was raging at the time in Perugia, and from sanitary reasons all funerals were forbidden.[2]

In answer to the reproach of cupidity which Vasari reproduces on every occasion, in too hostile a manner not to excite suspicion, we may oppose a fact so well authenticated, that as an historian he certainly ought not to have been ignorant of it: it is, that the interior of an oratory annexed to the Confraternità di Santa-Maria dei Bianci, which was opposite to the house of Perugino, was entirely decorated by him with frescos, in payment of which the

[1] With regard to these two accusations, Ruskin remarks ("Modern Painters," vol. ii. 128):—"That there is about Perugino's noblest faces a short-coming indefinable, an absence of the full outpouring of the sacred spirit that there is in Angelico; traceable, I doubt not, to some deficiencies and avaricious flaws of his heart, whose consequences in his conduct were such as to give Vasari hope that his lies might stick to him (for the contradiction of which in the main, if there be not contradiction enough in every line that the hand of Perugino drew, compare Rio; and note also what Rio has singularly missed observing, that Perugino, in his portrait of himself in the Florence Gallery, has put a scroll into the hand with the words 'Timete Deum:' thus surely indicating what he considered his duty and message)."—*Translator's Note.*

[2] All the authentic documents are cited and discussed by Mariotti, *Lettere perugine*, passim.

artist only demanded an omelet[1] (*una frittata*): a striking lesson of disinterestedness, which Vasari and the other laureate painters of the court of the Medici were not much disposed to practise.

This bitter animosity against the memory of Perugino had its source in the pitiful spite felt towards him by certain Florentine artists, and especially by the disciples and admirers of Michael Angelo, among whom we must reckon Vasari himself.[2] This school excited Perugino's antipathy, from the fatal influence he foresaw it would exercise over art, and his sympathies were rather called forth by those whose pure and graceful pencil bore some analogy to his own: thus he became the friend of Lorenzo Credi, whose tendencies were decidedly mystical, and of Andrea Verocchio, although he was not, as Vasari asserts, the pupil of the latter,[3] but admired in him the founder of a school full of poetry and promise, and not destined like the others to be infected by that idolatry for pagan subjects which was then becoming so universal.

The unpardonable crime of Perugino was his refusal to furnish his share of portraits to the museum of Paolo Giovio—that venal dispenser of praise and calumny, that historian at once so mercenary and imprudent, whose

[1] Mariotti, *ibid.*

[2] There seem to have been frequent quarrels between Michael Angelo and Perugino, who summoned the former to appear before the tribunal of the Eight, for having said that he was *Goffo del Arte*. Perugino thought he had a right to demand satisfaction for this insult; which, however, he did not obtain.—Vasari, *Vita di Perugino*.

[3] When Perugino came to Florence, Verocchio, who never painted more than one picture, had already given up painting.

pride was basely flattered by the generality of princes and artists from the fear they entertained of his pen; and it would, indeed, be unjust to make posterity a party to an act of unworthy vengeance exercised against the memory of a man whose only fault was that of giving his degraded contemporaries the example of a courage which they had not the resolution to imitate.

The early works of Perugino, which he executed before he left his country, have been passed over in silence by Vasari, who has devoted the first part of his biography to a tedious digression, in the form of a dialogue between Perugino and his master, who advises him to go and study in Florence, for reasons which would be very convincing if stated in a less prosy manner.

The style of Perugino was from this time irrevocably fixed in its more important points—his fundamental types were adopted, his mystical tendencies were as decided as at any subsequent period, and his vocation as a Christian artist incontestable; but his genius was susceptible of a further development, which we afterwards observe in the more vigorous tone his colouring assumed, so as to give greater relief to his figures: his manner was also destined to undergo a change: in a word, it was impossible for him to remain stationary; but this progress had to be effected without compromising the purity of the traditions transmitted to him by his predecessors. These two conditions were not easily reconciled at a moment when a singular concurrence of circumstances gave to Florentine art an entirely new direction, and placed it more and more under the influence of paganism and naturalism, to the prejudice of the religious element,

which took refuge at first in the Umbrian school, in order afterwards to shine forth with greater glory in the pictures of Perugino.

He arrived at Florence pure from the contemporaneous profanations; for in the numerous works he had already executed in his country, his pencil had been exclusively employed upon religious subjects. He had only made use of the gay and pastoral side of naturalism, treating the backgrounds of almost all his pictures with that care and taste which made him attach as much importance to the dress of his wife as to a work of art.[1] The novelty of his style, of his treatment, and of his types, united to the charm and variety of his landscapes, excited unusual admiration, and provoked his enemies to revenge themselves by satirical sonnets, which produced their intended effect upon the great patrons of the arts in Florence; for it appears that he was never employed on any works by the Medici, who were always desirous to patronise foreign artists, but who saw everything with the eyes of the servile national artists by whom they were surrounded.

But in default of the protection of the Medici, Perugino obtained that of Andrea Verocchio, the head of a school as interesting from the purity of its doctrines as from the renown of its two most celebrated scholars;[2] and besides this honourable suffrage, he obtained the patronage of those convents and monasteries which were not forced to submit to the dictation of their too powerful protectors. In short, such was the popularity he soon

[1] Vasari, *Life of Perugino.*

[2] Leonardo da Vinci and Lorenzo di Credi.

enjoyed, not only in Florence but in the whole of Italy, and even in foreign countries, that his works were regarded as objects of profitable speculation by the merchants.

The most important works he executed during his first residence in Florence were the paintings with which he decorated a convent situated beyond the Porta Pinti, a spot unfortunately exposed to the vandalism of the mercenary soldiers who encamped there half a century later, and who showed as little regard to the frescos of Perugino as to the sculptures of Benedetto da Majano. Besides these frescos were several altar-pieces, three of which, having miraculously escaped the common destruction in which so many of the treasures of art and the church itself were involved, are still to be seen in Florence.[1] We may recognise in them a slight tendency to naturalism, but always within the limits which a happy instinct forbad him to pass. It is possible he went further in the paintings in the cloister, into which Vasari tells us he introduced a great number of portraits; amongst others, those of the Prior and Andrea Verocchio. However this may be, a short journey among his native mountains sufficed to cure him of this tendency, and to imbue his pencil more strongly than ever with the idealism of the Umbrian school.

On his return to Perugia, at the age of thirty, he was charged with the execution of several works of importance,

[1] One is in the church of S. Giovannino, near the Porta Romana, and represents Christ on the cross surrounded by various saints; another is in the Pitti palace, and represents the Entombment: it is the one that has suffered the most. The third is in the academy delle belle Arti.

and acquitted himself in such a manner as to surpass the hopes his first attempts had excited.[1] An Adoration of the Magi, which was taken to Paris, and restored in 1815 to its former possessors, and which is now shut up in a little chapel in the convent of Sta. Maria Nuova, must belong to this interesting period of Perugino's life, when, having added to his peculiar excellencies all that appeared susceptible of assimilation, he commenced a spirited and original career, destined to be distinguished by new progress during twenty consecutive years.[2] It was shortly after this period that Pope Sixtus IV. invited him to Rome, to paint three large compositions in the Sistine chapel, the most important of which, representing the Assumption of the Virgin, was mercilessly destroyed under the pontificate of Paul III., to make room for the Last Judgment of Michael Angelo.

The two others still retain almost all their freshness, particularly the first, in which the artist has represented the Baptism of Christ, and which unites all the picturesque details which add to the beauty of the landscape background, without lessening the effect of the principal subject. The fresh and varied vegetation, the river winding between the mountains and losing itself in the hazy distance, the beautiful ruin which seems an imita-

[1] See in Rumohr (vol. ii. p. 338) a curious extract from the archives of Perugia, which proves Perugino to have held, as early as the year 1475, a high place in the esteem of his fellow-citizens.

[2] This picture of the Adoration of the Magi is without a date; but the artist has represented himself in it in a manner which renders our conjecture very probable. Besides, the influence of the Florentine school is still so visible, that many persons have considered it the work of a Florentine artist.

tion of the Colosseum, the triumphal arch seen through the trees, and another building resembling the Pantheon, —all reveal the mind of a poet equally alive to the charms of Nature and of Art. The image of his native mountains associating itself to the impressions which the first sight of the monuments of Rome naturally produced, he could not resolve to separate them in his first work, and this explains their introduction in the fresco of the Baptism. That in which St. Peter receives the keys, the emblems of the power transmitted by him to his successors, is more simple and majestic in its arrangement, and in every respect worthy of the profound signification of the symbol represented in it. The architectural decoration is not too prominent; it consists of a circular temple surrounded by a portico, in the style of that seen in Raphael's Spozalizio, and is no less ornamental in the work of the master than in that of the disciple.[1]

It was now in Perugino's power to make a brilliant fortune at the capital of the Christian world: he was the favourite of the pontifical court, and, consequently, overwhelmed with commissions; while his ever-increasing success drove his rivals to despair. Besides his pictures in the Sistine chapel, those in the appartamento Borgia at the Vatican, in the Colonna palace, and in the church of San Marco, excited the greatest admiration. But his love for his native mountains prevailed over the temptations this rich harvest of glory offered, and he re-

[1] The same background was reproduced in the Spozalizio of Perugino, a work of his best period. This picture disappeared after the treaty of Tolentino, and all trace of it is lost.

turned to Perugia with the determination never again to leave it.

His genius was at this time in its full force and maturity, while it still retained the freshness and *naïveté* that marked his early works. His colouring had acquired vigour, his design had lost its timidity, and his types had been much improved, particularly that of the Virgin, whose cheek-bones are too prominent in his early pictures. Also, it is not difficult to distinguish the works which belong to this period. The Madonna he painted for the chapel of the Signori, and which still exists there,[1] is a proof of the progress he had made: in this picture we begin to recognise, or rather to have some faint idea, of the germs of excellence which were afterwards matured by the hand of Raphael, and the gradual development of which might, doubtless, be traced in Perugino himself up to his fiftieth year, if it were possible to establish any chronological order of succession in the works executed by him during this period, which terminates with the end of the fifteenth century.

Unfortunately very few have a date inscribed on them, and we must be content to conjecture that of the others. The two frescos of the Sistine chapel, the charming picture in the Palazzo Albani,[2] and the Ma-

[1] This picture represents the Madonna with the infant Christ, and two saints on each side of the throne. Constantini, the author of the *Guida di Perugia*, is inclined to think that it is partly by the hand of Raphael himself; such is the imposing character of the work.

[2] It represents the Virgin and several angels in adoration before the infant Christ. The author has inscribed his name on it, with the date 1481.

donna of the Palazzo dei Signori at Perugia, painted in 1483, may assist us in forming a comparison between the contemporaneous or subsequent productions that issued in such numbers from his inexhaustible pencil. We may, indeed, without exposing ourselves to the reproach of too great indulgence, extend the limit of this remarkable fertility to the period at which he executed the frescos of the Sala del Cambio; that is to say, to the year 1500: so that he may be considered to have flourished for nearly a quarter of a century, without any visible symptoms of decline.

During this period all those magnificent pictures were executed, with which almost all the churches in Perugia were formerly adorned, and which are now for the most part dispersed in the principal cities of Italy, or even in foreign countries.[1] There are two in the Vatican, which possess all the characteristics of the second manner of Perugino; the graceful oval of the Virgin's head has nothing in common with the angular contours and masculine forms of his early types. A Madonna, which adorns one of the side-chapels of the lower church at Assisi, struck me as being still more charming; and although, from the obscurity of the locality, I have only retained a faint recollection of the accessories, I have, nevertheless, a most clear and delicious impression of the principal figure.

But we must seek the masterpiece of Perugino in Sant' Agostino at Perugia. This church possesses, be-

[1] The only remarkable work by Perugino in the Louvre is the allegorical combat between Love and Chastity; a poetical and graceful composition, which shows his skill in the choice of attitudes and types.

sides four or five pictures in his first manner, an Adoration of the Magi, which formerly ornamented the church of St. Antonio, and the *predella* of which contained four busts of saints, of such exquisite beauty that Raphael has been commonly supposed to have had some hand in them.[1] The picture itself is worthy of him, and may sustain a comparison, as regards the arrangement, the colouring, the drapery, the types, and the airs of the heads, with the most celebrated productions of the contemporaneous artists.

Notwithstanding the perfection of this work, it would not have borne away the palm if the church of S. Pietro still possessed the magnificent picture of the Ascension, for which Perugino received five hundred golden ducats, a sum equal to a thousand Roman piastres of the present day.[2] In the upper part he represented God the Father between two angels; and below, on the *predella*, were four busts of saints, which are still to be seen in the same church, and which have never been surpassed by Raphael himself in the holy character of the heads, and in depth of expression. St. Benedict and Sta. Scolastica have never been better represented on canvas, and as much may be said of St. Maur and Sta. Placida. In the presence of these four heads the most *exigeante* imagination must feel fully satisfied, and learn to comprehend the high import of that mystical talent which charcterised the Umbrian school.

[1] Costantini, *Guida di Perugia*, p. 226.

The same has been said of several pictures painted by Perugia before the year 1500.

[2] Vasari says this was the best oil-painting by the hand of Perugino which Perugia possessed.

This picture of the Ascension was completed in 1495; and if we were asked to assign the precise period at which the genius of Perugino reached its highest point we should mention this date, as being at once that of his best oil-picture and his finest fresco: I allude to that which he executed in the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena at Florence, and which is mentioned by Rumohr as the most perfect of his works. The most exquisite taste is shown in the disposition of a small number of figures in a space of considerable extent: in the centre is Christ on the cross, with the Magdalen at his feet; then the Virgin, whose attitude and expression of bitter grief are not spoilt by any affectation of dramatic effect; lastly, St. John, St. Benedict, and St. Bernard, whose simple and pathetic expression is perfectly in harmony with that of the principal personages.[1]

The Madonna in the oratory of San Pietro Martire, the whole, or at least a part of which has been attributed to Raphael, was probably painted about the same time; as was also the picture of the first Person of the Trinity, now in the church of St. Gervais at Paris, and which probably formed part of a larger work in the style of the Ascension, to which we have already alluded.

Notwithstanding the reputation enjoyed by the frescos in the Sala del Cambio at Perugia, we cannot consider them quite equal to those at Florence, which were

[1] The severe rules of the convent render access to this picture extremely difficult to travellers, who must obtain a special permission from the archbishop before they can penetrate into the interior of the convent. This fresco has the advantage of being in perfect preservation, and has, consequently, never been retouched. Among the original drawings in the Uffizi are several by Perugino, amongst the rest his studies for this fresco.

painted five years earlier; neither shall we cite them as the first symptom of decline, and a sort of transition, from Perugino's best manner to that which he adopted in his old age.[1] The prophets and sibyls, which are below the figure of God the Father in the first of these four grand compositions, do not in the least betray the feebleness of a hand paralysed by age; the fine head of Solomon, with its steadfast and serene air, the two noble figures of David and Moses, the exquisite sibyls of Tibur and Cumæ, in which we recognise the types afterwards adopted by Raphael, still show a very lively and poetic imagination, and this we shall be the more inclined to admit after having examined the compartment in which the shepherds are represented kneeling at a respectful distance from the infant Saviour, who appears to listen either to the sounds of a bagpipe played by one of them, or to the symphony of the three angels above, for a concert is taking place at the same moment in heaven and earth. Never has this interesting subject been treated so happily, although it has been so frequently reproduced; and never have all the charming details of rustic devotion, of which it is susceptible, been so well given.

The picture of the Transfiguration is worthy of attention, because Raphael has copied almost all the upper part of it; but he has not attained the same beauty of expression which Perugino has given to his Apostles, and particularly to his St. John, who shields himself with his hand from the rays of light which dazzle him. As for the fourth compartment, in which are represented

[1] This is Rumohr's opinion, which he has expressed in rather a contemptuous manner.

allegorical figures of the four cardinal Virtues, together with those Greek and Roman heroes who have distinguished themselves by the practice of them, it is a work without character, vigour, or attention to ancient costume, which Perugino never took the trouble to study: it is probable that this classical subject was the offspring of the brain of some pedant, who was in want of a pretext for writing certain learned distichs on the walls, where they may still be read.

Perugino's glorious career as an artist may be said to have closed with the completion of this great work; for all those he executed after the year 1500 were impressed with increasing tokens of decline, and present the sad spectacle of one of the most powerful artists that the world has ever produced surviving his fame for twenty years, and multiplying, with a deplorable fertility, the proofs of his intellectual prostration. It was then that Perugino, in order to satisfy the demands made upon him by almost all the villages in the neighbourhood of Perugia, set himself to work with as much rapidity as his advanced age permitted; and when he made his last journey to Florence he was so little aware of the decline of his powers, that he undertook to paint a picture of the Assumption for the church of the Servites. This picture, to the triumph of his enemies, was not thought worthy to occupy the place that had been reserved for it;[1] and the author returned to his country, where the filial gratitude with which he was regarded spared his last remaining years the

[1] This picture may still be seen in one of the side-chapels of the Annunziata; and, unfortunately, confirms the severe judgment passed upon it by his contemporaries.

painful truths he would have had to endure elsewhere. He was nearly eighty when he completed, in 1521, a fresco in the convent of S. Silvestro,[1] commenced twenty years before by his disciple Raphael, and this may be considered as his final adieu to art, and the last effort of his pencil before he descended to the tomb.[2]

It is a glorious exception in the case of Perugino, and one that can only be explained by the vitality of the doctrines he taught his disciples, that the decline with which his last productions were stamped did not extend to his school; on the contrary, we find it flourishing more than ever under his auspices, at the precise period when it became most necessary to avoid treading in his steps: then it is that its fertilty commences, and that it produced the immortal painter, who may justly be called the Prince of Christian Art, at least during the most interesting portion of his life.

And yet, as regarded variety of subject, this school was much less richly endowed than any of its contemporaries: cyclical and historical subjects, whether drawn from the Old Testament or from the acts of the martyrs, were almost unknown to it. The field of art was not divided, as at Florence, in such a manner as to allot to some the animal, to others the vegetable kingdom. In Umbria, no learned and voluptuous aristocracy encouraged the display of that mythological licentiousness

[1] This is an error, as the fresco here alluded to is in the church of S. Severo (see page 213); and also Kugler's *Hand-Book of Italian Painting.—Translator's note.*

[2] The figures of the saints in the lower part of the picture are by Perugino. The upper part may be considered as the first idea of the glory in the Dispute on the Sacrament.

which gave such a charm to the compositions of the laureate painters; even the valuable resources to be gained from the study of the bas-reliefs, and from the antique draperies, were treated with contempt by the Umbrian artists, who continued perpetually to repeat the same *motives*, and confined themselves within a narrow circle of representations, for the most part dogmatic. Thus, we find that the Florentine artists reproached Perugino with the sterility of his imagination, and were by no means satisfied with his reply that he was at all events at liberty to copy himself; for they were incapable of understanding that the progress of an artist, who seeks his inspiration beyond the sphere of sensible objects, does not merely consist in the variety or picturesque grouping of the subject, nor in the depth and fusion of the colours, nor even in the delicacy and purity of the design, but rather in the development and progressive perfection of certain types, which, concealed at first within the most secret recesses of his imagination, and afterwards regarded as a long and religious exercise for his pencil, had at length become intimately combined with all that was poetical and exalted in his nature.

It is the glory of the Umbrian school that it unceasingly pursued this transcendental aim of Christian art, without allowing itself to be seduced by example or distracted by clamour. It would seem that a special blessing was attached to the particular localities sanctified by the presence of St. Francis of Assisi, and that the perfume of his holiness preserved the fine arts from corruption in the neighbourhood of that hill, where so many painters had successively contributed to decorate

his tomb. Thence arose, like sweet-smelling incense to heaven, prayers, the fervour and purity of which insured their efficacy; thence descended, like beneficent dew on the more corrupt cities of the plain, inspirations of penitence, which rapidly spread over the whole of Italy.[1] The happy influence exercised by the Umbrian school over painting formed a part of this mission of purification, and we see Perugino, who was its great missionary, extend its ramifications from one end of Italy to the other, with a degree of success unexampled since the time of Giotto.[2]

The picture of the Assumption, executed by Perugino for the cathedral of Naples, had such an effect on the

[1] *Nell anno* 1260, *una subita compunzione invase prima i Perugini, e poi quasi tutti i popoli dell' Italia.*—" Osservatore Fiorentino," vol. v. p. 85.

[2] Giotto, who went to Naples in 1325, left some disciples there, but not one who deserves to be called his continuator. The works of a certain Maestro Simone, who instructed his son Francesco di Simone in the art of painting, seem most to have resembled those of Giotto. These are the only painters of whom this school can boast in the fourteenth century. In the first half of the fifteenth we have Colantonio del Fiore, in whose hands art made so little progress that we can with difficulty distinguish his works from those of his master, Francesco di Simone; and what appears still more incredible, his pupil, Angiolo Franco, who was posterior to Masaccio, was reputed a clever imitator of Giotto. Another pupil of Colantonio, Zingaro, has become famous from his adventures; he was at first a blacksmith, and afterwards became, like Quintin Metsys, a painter and son-in-law to his master. His studies at Bologna under Lippo Dalmasio, at Florence under Lorenzo Bicci, at Rome under Gentile da Fabriano, and at Venice under Vivarini, produced no good result, not even that of a cold eclecticism. After him came Matteo di Siena, who acquired reputation from a picture of the Massacre of the Innocents, one of the most hideous productions of this century. We next meet with some insignificant disciples of Zingaro; and lastly, Andrea di Salerno, who was converted to more vital traditions by the sight of a picture by Perugino.

imagination of Andrea di Salerno, almost the sole representative at this time of the Neapolitan school, that in the first transports of his enthusiasm he set out for Perugia, with the intention of entering the school of that great master, but happening to meet on his journey with some passionate admirers of Raphael, he was induced to give him the preference.

Perugino infused new vigour into the school of Siena, which had been declining for more than a century. The absurd statutes which originated in the hatred borne by the Sienese to the Florentines, secured to the national artists a shameful monopoly, which, far from being advantageous to art, had almost totally annihilated it. When the fame of Perugino's first works spread through Italy, this barrier raised against foreign artists was not permitted to exist for him, and the Sienese school shone forth with renewed splendour—thanks to the immense influence exercised by the two great pictures left by him at Siena, an influence that must be attributed in a great degree to the natural sympathy which had long existed between the two schools. The *peruginesque* style continued in favour at Siena for nearly half a century, and it was owing to their strenuous efforts to appropriate it to themselves, that Pacchiorotto and Beccafumi, imitators full of life and originality, succeeded in taking their place among the great artists of the period.[1] The important works executed by Pinturicchio and Raphael in the cele-

[1] Siena possesses several charming pictures by Pacchiorotto; amongst others a Madonna in the church of St. Christopher, and an Ascension in that of the Carmine. The latter is quite in Perugino's style. Pacchiorotto worked in France with Il Rosso. We shall have occasion to speak again of Beccafumi.

brated sacristy of the cathedral completed the conquest commenced by Perugino.

It is more difficult to appreciate the influence he exercised in the north of Italy. The picture that he executed for the Certosa at Pavia still adorns that magnificent solitude.[1] Another was sent by him to Cremona for the church of S. Agostino, where it was to be seen at the end of the last century:[2] the subject was a Madonna, with St. Paul on one side and St. Anthony on the other. This picture bore the date 1494, and was, probably, one of the best productions of this artist, since it immediately preceded the fresco at Florence and the Assumption at Perugia. Cremona possessed at this time in Boccaccio Boccaccino an original and fertile artist, who had already made considerable progress in that path which the Umbrian school had opened. He possessed all the genius which was requisite to found one himself, as the charming frescos with which he has adorned his native city sufficiently prove. But, attracted irresistibly towards the style of Perugino, he began to study it with all the perseverance of a passionate admirer; and if he did not become his pupil, as Pascoli asserts, he became at least one of his happiest imitators—inferior, perhaps, to his model in skilful grouping and in the airs of the heads, but sometimes even surpassing him in the richness of his costumes and the energy of his attitudes.[3]

[1] That is to say, the central picture is still there; the wings were detached when Lombardy was conquered by the French.

[2] Morelli, *Notizie di Opere di disegno*, p. 35, and note 62.

[3] He executed a Madonna for the church of St. Vincent at Cremona, which might easily be mistaken for a work of Perugino's. Lanzi speaks of a Sposalizio, in which Boccaccino had even reproduced the architectural

There is every reason to believe that Cremona was the furthest limit of Perugino's influence in northern Italy, where it was powerfully counterbalanced by two schools, still in their infancy, but already full of future promise.[1]

The eagerness with which his works were sought by the Bolognese, and the peculiar character stamped upon the pictures executed about this time at Bologna, sufficiently prove that this city had been influenced by the extraordinary impulsion given to Christian art by the Umbrian school. At Bologna it was not necessary to provoke a reaction against paganism as at Florence, or to revive dying traditions as at Siena. The Bolognese school, very different at this time from what it afterwards became, still retained the severe and religious character it had received from its first founders, and nothing had caused it to deviate from the path it had instinctively chosen. In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it had been rendered famous by several artists, whose names deserve to have been held in remembrance. From the school of Franco, himself rescued by three verses of Dante[2] from the unjust oblivion into which his disciples have fallen, issued Vitale and Lorenzo, united to one another by a pious fraternity of pencil. A great number of frescos by these two artists were formerly to be seen in the convents of Bologna, where it was their

decoration of the background. The masterpiece of this almost unknown artist is in the cathedral of Cremona; from the scarcity of his easel pictures, the greater number of travellers are even unacquainted with his name.

[1] That of Leonardo da Vinci at Milan, and that of Giovanni Bellini at Venice.

[2] "Piu ridon le carte
Che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese."—*Purgatorio*, c. ii.

custom to paint alternately succeeding portions of the same subject, with the exception of the Crucifixion, for Vitale always refused this painful subject; saying, that Christ was sufficiently crucified already—once by the Jews, and daily by the evil actions of wicked Christians.[1] His disciple, Jacopo Avanzi, was long under the influence of similar scruples, leaving his friend and fellow-disciple, Simone, to paint crucifixes,[2] and himself only undertaking to paint images of the holy Virgin. The destiny of these two artists was no less closely united than that of Vitale and Lorenzo. Like them they worked side by side, with a success that cemented their friendship, while it added to their renown; and the touching recollections associated with their names obtained such empire over the minds of their countrymen, that two centuries later, when the enthusiasm for early religious pictures had considerably cooled, their works continued to be the object of a veneration at once religious and patriotic—a veneration which Michael Angelo himself did not disdain to share.[3]

The traditional piety of the old Bolognese school was still more striking in Lippo Dalmasio, who, like Jacopo Avanzi, would only paint images of the holy Virgin, and professed a peculiar devotion for her; and such was the

[1] *Felsina Pittrice*, vol. i. p. 17. The favourite subject of Vitale was the infant Jesus in the manger.

[2] He was named from this, Simone dei Crocefissi.—*Felsina Pittrice*, ibid.

[3] *Felsina Pittrice*, vol. i. p. 20. The principal work they executed conjointly was that in the church of Mezzaretta, in the year 1400. It represented the history of our Lord from his birth to the last supper. The Passion of Christ is not by them, but painted by a Ferrarese artist.

importance he attached to this work, that he never commenced painting without the previous preparation of a severe fast the evening before, and the reception of the communion on the day itself, in order that his imagination might be purified and his pencil sanctified. The best proof that the influence of a preparation of this nature was not chimerical, is the fact of the extraordinary popularity that the Madonnas of this artist enjoyed, so that it was almost considered a disgrace to be without one;[1] and also the remarkable testimony of Guido, who, discovering in the Virgins of Lippo Dalmasio something of a superhuman character which could only be attributed to a secret influence directing his pencil, did not hesitate to declare that it was impossible for any modern artist, however he might be assisted by the resources of talent and study, to succeed in uniting so much holiness, modesty, and purity in one figure. It was, also, no unusual thing to find Guido standing entranced before one of these revered images, when they were uncovered for public devotion on the days set apart for the worship of the Madonna.[2]

[1] *Felsina Pittrice*, vol. i. p. 26. In his latter days he embraced the monastic life, and continued to paint Madonnas, which he afterwards distributed as alms to the faithful. It required a command from the superior of the convent before he could be induced to paint the history of the prophet Elijah.

One of his Madonnas may still be seen over the great door of San Procolo, another is in the church of the Servites, a third in that of San Giovanni in Monte, and a fourth in the Annunziata.

[2] Malvasia relates that once, on the festival of the Annunziata, he found Guido in an ecstasy of admiration before a Madonna which had just been uncovered; and he afterwards relates the interesting conversation to which this meeting gave rise.

It was under these auspices that Christian art developed itself at Bologna until the commencement of the fifteenth century, and the mystical tendencies which more and more predominated there could not fail, sooner or later, to have its effect upon the natural sympathies of this school. The vicinity of Florence, where naturalism already menaced the pure religious element, and where paganism was about to show itself as a still more formidable rival, might have proved dangerous to the Bolognese school, if an almost exclusive admiration for the works of Vitale and Lorenzo, of Avanzi and Simone, of Dalmasio and his pupils,[1] had been less deeply rooted in the minds of the artists and the people. It was towards the mountains of Perugia and Assisi that their predilections were directed, and although the communications between these two schools are not established by any very imposing historical proofs, the identity of aim, of spirit, and inspirations, all evidently drawn from one common source, leave no doubt of the fact,—so that, instead of being two distinct schools, it would be more simple to consider one as the ramification of the other, more particularly as there is a striking resemblance in their respective destinies; for both expired almost at the same time, at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

We cannot, therefore, be surprised that the Umbrian painters should have found admirers at Bologna, and that the greatest efforts were made there to obtain the

[1] He formed a great number, most of whom were very mediocre; but this has not prevented Malvasia from mentioning them all: he has devoted four pages of his work to this dry nomenclature.

works of Perugino. Several still remain in the churches and in the galleries where they are placed, probably accidentally, by the side of those of Francesco Francia, so that we can compare them at leisure, and convince ourselves by ocular demonstration how much he was influenced by the works of Perugino.

One particular circumstance in the life of Francia may serve to explain this resemblance: it is, that his first appearance as a painter coincides with the period at which the first pictures of Perugino reached Bologna. Until then, he was only known for the beauty of his niellos and medals: his success in this branch of art had secured him the favour of the Bentivoglio and of Pope Julius II.; but the field was too narrow to enable him to display the hidden poetry of his soul. After having executed a few insignificant works, which serve as a prelude to the more important labours his genius urged him to undertake, he at length produced his first picture in the year 1490, when he had already attained his fortieth year. This first essay was considered as a masterpiece, and the artist was immediately employed to paint a Madonna, with all the accessory details, for the chapel of Giovanni Bentivoglio in San Giacomo Maggiore: here he so far surpassed the hopes his countrymen had entertained of him, that they began, according to Vasari, to look upon him as something superhuman, and proudly opposed him to the leaders of the rival schools. During the ten succeeding years he continued to improve his style; his colouring acquired more charm and vigour, his contours became full and round, and the extraordinary finish of his works, joined to the exquisite purity of his

types and the celestial expression which characterises his figures, excited such admiration at Bologna and elsewhere, that he was hardly able to execute the numerous works demanded from him for churches and private oratories, not only in Bologna, but in the surrounding cities; among which we may notice Ferrara, where the magnificent picture he painted for the cathedral still exists; and also Lucca, which justly reckons amongst its most precious treasures those pictures with which it was adorned by the pencil of Francia, and which may be seen in the ducal palace[1] and in the basilica of S. Frediano.

It would be both tedious and superfluous to enumerate all the localities he decorated with his works. We need not go further than the city of Bologna to enjoy, in its fullest extent, the delight which the sight of his works in the gallery and three of the churches cannot fail to afford us.[2] In the gallery we shall admire, besides three large compositions repeated by him elsewhere, a small oblong picture, in which the Virgin is represented in a vast and sublime landscape, and which for the pastoral poetry it contains equals, if it does not surpass, the most

[1] These pictures are now in the National Gallery, having been purchased at the sale of the Duke of Lucca's collection in 1843.—*Translator's note.*

[2] I ought, however, to state, that the true chefs-d'œuvre of Francia are not at Bologna, or even in Italy. The Imperial Gallery at Vienna possesses one, in which the Virgin is represented on a throne with the infant Jesus: on one side is St. Catherine, and on the other St. Francis; below is a little St. John, standing, with his finger raised, and admirable in attitude and expression. It would be impossible to concentrate more Christian poetry in a small space. The picture in the gallery at Munich is still more perfect, at least in the type of the Virgin, the

celebrated works of the same kind produced by other painters. In the church of the Annunziata will be found three of Francia's most remarkable productions; in that of San Martino, where one of his most beautiful Madonnas is placed beside an Assumption by Perugino, we shall have a good opportunity of drawing a comparison between these two artists, which will not be to the advantage of the latter; lastly, in that of San Giacomo, besides the chapel of the Bentivoglio, of which we have already spoken, we must perforce admire that of Sta. Cecilia,[1] even in its present ruined and deserted state; for on its dilapidated walls divers episodes in the life of that heroic virgin have been traced by the disciples, and under the direction of Francia, who insisted on painting with his own hand the compartment in which the martyrdom of the saint is represented. It is, I believe, the only fresco painting by him which Bologna now possesses.

One of the most interesting events in the life of Francia was the romantic friendship he contracted in his

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beauty of which has never been surpassed by Francia. The infant Jesus reposes on the turf amid flowers, and his mother approaches him with a respectful tenderness: all this is most divinely expressed. The gallery of Berlin is numerically richer, since, besides two or three beautiful works by Francesco, it possesses six by his son: amongst those by Francesco is a Madonna encircled by cherubim, and holding the infant Jesus, who blesses several saints in adoration before him: this picture is incontestably one of the greatest marvels of Christian art. In France we have no means of judging of the excellence of this great artist, as the Louvre does not contain a single work by him.

[1] This small church is not in any way connected with S. Giacomo, although it stands near it. It now serves as a public passage.—*Translator's note.*

later years with the young Raphael, whom he had never seen, but whose apparition he saluted from afar, as that of a star destined to eclipse all others by its radiance. Here was an additional proof of his natural sympathy for the Umbrian school; for Raphael was then still under the influence of those pure and mystical doctrines he had learnt in it, and the designs that he sent to his friend in 1508, as well as the pictures that the latter had the opportunity of seeing at Bologna,[1]—all bear the impress of that angelic purity which characterises his early works. Vasari relates, that the sight of Raphael's St. Cecilia produced such an impression on Francia, and made him feel so strongly the nullity of his own works,

[1] Malvasia cites a letter written by Raphael to Francia on the 5th of September, 1508, the year in which he began to paint the *Sala della Segnatura* in the Vatican. The tone of this letter proves that their intimacy was not of recent date: Raphael thanks Francia for having sent him his portrait, and excuses himself for not having been able to finish his own.

As this letter may be interesting to certain readers, the translator has inserted it as given by Bottari in the *Lettere Pittoriche*:—

Raffaele Sanzio a M. Francesco Raibolini, detto il Francia.

Messer Francesco mio caro, ricevo in questo punto il vostro ritratto recatomi da Bazzotto ben condizionato e senza offesa alcuna, del che sommamente vi ringrazio. Egli è bellissimo, e tanto vivo che m' inganno talora, credendomi di essere con esso voi e sentire le vostre parole. Pregovi a compatirmi e perdonarmi la dilazione e lunghezza del mio, che per le gravi e incessanti occupazioni non ho potuto sinora fare di mia mano, conforme il nostro accordo, chè ve l' avrei mandato fatto da qualche mio giovane, e da me ritocco, ma non si conviene; anzi converiasi per conoscere non potere agguagliare il vostro. Compatitemi per grazia, perchè voi bene ancora avrete provato altre volte che cosa voglia dire essere privo della sua libertà, e vivere obbligato a padroni, che poi, ec. Vi mando intanto per lo stesso, che parte di ritorno fra sei giorni, un altro disegno, et è quello di quel Presepe, se bene diverso assai, come vedrete dall' operato, e che voi vi siete compiacinto di lodar tanto, siccome fate inces-

that he died from despair. As he was about to fabricate a history, he might as well have assigned his death to a more honourable cause, or at least have contented himself with a less gross and impudent calumny; since it is a well-known fact, that Francia did not die of grief from this cause, but, on the contrary, survived Raphael for more than ten years,[1] continuing, no doubt, to honour his genius and memory, but never imitating him in the deplorable change his style underwent, and enjoying to the end of his life that serenity of soul which breathes in all his works, and which was never disturbed by the unworthy passion imputed to him by Vasari.

If we believe the very authentic documents found among the portfolios of Francia, many years after his

santemente dell' altre mie cose, che mi sento arrossire, siccome faccio ancora di questa bagattella che vi goderete, perciò più in segno di obbedienza e d' amore, che per altro rispetto. Se in contraccambio riceverò quello della vostra istoria della Giuditta, eo lo riporrò fra le cose più care e preziose.

Monsignore Datario aspetta con grande ansietà la sua Madonnella, la sua grande il Cardinale Riario, come tutto sentirete più precisamente da Bazzotto. Io pure le mirerò con quel gusto e sodisfazione che vedo lodo tutte l' altre, non vedendone da nessun altro più belle e più divote e ben fatte. Fatevi intanto animo, valetevi della vostra solita prudenza, e assicurativi che sento le vostre afflizione come mie proprie. Scquite d' amarmi, come vi amo di tutto cuore. Roma, il di 5 di Settembre, 1508.

[1] This fable was first refuted by Malvasia, who cites a number of pictures several years posterior to the date of this pretended catastrophe; and afterwards still more victoriously by Lanzi, who gives the precise date of Francia's death (7th of April, 1533). The St. Cecilia having been painted in 1514, or, according to the very plausible conjecture of Rumohr, in 1510. It is a remarkable circumstance, that from the period when Raphael adopted his last manner there are no traces of intimacy or correspondence between the two artists, as if from that time they had ceased to understand one another.

death, the number of his pupils must have amounted to 220:[1] amongst them we must distinguish his son Giacomo, a number of whose pictures were formerly to be found in the churches and palaces of Bologna, and who has reproduced the style, execution, types, and colouring of his father, with such fidelity as often to mislead the most experienced eye. As for two other members of the same family, Giulio and Giovanni Battista Francia, the slight interest attaching to their names not having counterbalanced their insignificance as artists, they have fallen, with at least 210 of their fellow-disciples, into the most complete neglect, from which the author of the lives of the Bolognese painters has in vain endeavoured to rescue them.

The most celebrated of Francia's pupils were collected around him when he worked at the chapel of St. Cecilia; but only three among them appear to have assisted in the execution of these frescos, still so beautiful, in spite of the injuries they have sustained, not only from time, but from the hand of man, and which are, for the school of Francia, what the Loggia of the Vatican is for that of Raphael.

Of the three pupils of Francia, Chiodarolo is the least known to us, and to him must be attributed the more defective parts of this important composition. With regard to Lorenzo Costa and Amico Aspertini, who also worked there under the auspices of their common master, they may be considered to have been with Giacomo Francia the worthy continuators of the school

[1] Malvasia, vol. i. p. 60.

to which they belonged, and to have resisted the prosaic innovations by which painting was assailed on all sides.[1]

Lorenzo Costa surpassed all his fellow-disciples in imagination and originality. His works are distinguished by a vigour and richness of colouring that almost tempt us to believe that he had already served an apprenticeship at Venice in the school of Giovanni Bellini, when he quitted Ferrara, his country, in order to become the disciple and passionate admirer of Francia. He also commenced his career under the patronage of the powerful family of the Bentivoglio; and we may see in the chapel of which we have already spoken, in San Giacomo, the precious monument by which he has immortalised the memory of his benefactor.[2] Both here and in the frescos representing the history of St. Cecilia he is very inferior to his master; but in the oil-pictures which are in the Palazzo Ercolani and behind the high altar in San Giovanni,[3] we recognise at once the great

[1] The best works of Aspertini at Bologna were on the façades of certain palaces, which have now been either demolished or whitewashed. The finest work of this artist now remaining to us is in the chapel of St. Agostino, in the church of San Frediano, at Lucca.

[2] On one side is represented the triumph of Life and Death; on the other, Giovanni Bentivoglio, with his wife, his four sons, and seven daughters, adoring the image of the holy Virgin. The prayer of the father is given in the following admirable distich:—

Me, patriam, et dulces cará cum conjuge natos
Commendo precibus, Virgo beato, tuis.

[3] The picture in S. Giovanni is certainly the masterpiece of Costa, who did not paint it from Francia's design, as Malvasia asserts. The figures of Francia are much more airy; Costa is particularly admirable in his landscapes. There is a small picture by him in the Louvre, painted in distemper, and representing the coronation of Isabella d'Este. It gives a complete idea of the grace and elegance of his style.

poet and the great colourist, and feel no surprise that the celebrated Dosso Dossi has been sometimes ranked among his disciples.

Innocenzio da Imola, Bagnacavallo, and the engraver Marc Antonio, may also be considered to belong to this school, for all three had Francia for their first master; the two first continued to follow his style for some time, and the third, treated by him with paternal tenderness, brought to perfection, under his immediate guidance, the incomparable talent destined at a later period to associate his name with that of Raphael. But, alas! all three were tempted into new paths. Innocenzio da Imola and Bagnacavallo went to Florence, in order to acquire in the studio of Mariotto Albertinelli that bold and free style introduced about this time to supersede the dryness and monotony of the traditional compositions; and on their return to Bologna they were the first to set up rival altars. As for Marc Antonio, his style underwent its first change at the period of his journey to Venice, where he first saw Albert Durer's engravings, which, owing to their novelty, were at that time in great request among all the artists. He was so delighted with them that, not content with laying out all the money he had brought with him from Bologna in the purchase of these prints, he set himself to imitate them with such extraordinary success, that his copies were sold throughout Italy as originals.[1] This first step in a new career, which became daily more attractive, alien-

[1] They consisted of the thirty-six pieces known under the name of the great Passion of Jesus Christ, and are among the most important works of Albert Durer.

ated him from the comparatively stationary school which had hitherto afforded employment to his burin,[1] and Rome henceforth appeared as the only theatre which offered him a sufficiently vast perspective of glory and activity. It was there that his defection reached its height in a blind devotion to naturalism and paganism, which began at this time to take possession of the Roman school—a twofold evil, which the justly admired engravings of Marc Antonio rendered still more contagious. But this revolution was preceded by a period of great importance in the history of art, during which the divine pencil of Raphael developed and brought to perfection the precious germs of that mystical school of which he was the greatest ornament, so long as his imagination remained innocent and Christian.

Up to the present time we have only spoken of the influence exercised by the works of Perugino at Naples, Siena, Cremona, and Bologna, and have said nothing of his scholars, among whom Raphael is not the only one who deserves to occupy our attention. No inconvenience would, indeed, result from the omission of the names of

[1] The engravings executed by Marc Antonio after the designs of Francia are few in number. The following are mentioned by Malvasia, t. i. p. 70–74 :—

1st. A Madonna, who presents the infant Jesus to the little St. John.

2d. The small composition known under the name of the Musician of Marc Antonio.

3d. St. Catherine, with a fragment of her wheel and the palm of Martyrdom. (This is one of his earliest works.)

4th. St. Martha, with her hand on a dragon. (The pendant of the last.)

5th. St. John the Baptist, with a long reed cross in his hand.

6th. St. Sebastian, with his hands tied above his head.

7th and 8th. St. Job and St. Roch.

Zoppo of Florence,[1] of Bacchiacca,[2] of Montevarchi,[3] of Girolamo Genga,[4] and of Caporali, who early renounced painting in order to become the commentator of Vitruvius; but it is otherwise with Paris Alfani, who imitated Raphael more successfully than any other of his fellow-disciples; with Gerino di Pistoja, who has left such charming pictures in the churches of his native city;[5] with Lo Spagna, who was one of the best colourists of his time, and who, having been driven from Perugia by the envy of his rivals, enriched Spoleto, where he was more hospitably received, with the most interesting productions of his vigorous pencil; and when we have added to these names those of Pinturicchio, and Luigi d'Assisi, better known under that of Ingegno, we shall have done full justice to the pure and fertile school which produced them.

It is difficult to ascertain who this Luigi d'Assisi was, and how he came to acquire the flattering cognomen by which he is always distinguished by Vasari and Lanzi, for, on the one hand, we cannot doubt the admiration he excited among his contemporaries, and on the other

[1] Zoppo, on his return to Florence, painted a number of Madonnas in the style of his master Perugino.

[2] Bacchiacca excelled in painting small figures, animals, and grotesques.

[3] Montevarchi worked much at S. Giovanni di Valdarno and at Montevarchi, his native place.

[4] Genga was as much the pupil of Signorelli as of Perugino, and executed many works at Florence, Siena, and Rome.

[5] His chef-d'œuvre is in the church of San Pietro at Pistoja: if the tone were more vigorous, we could not wish anything better. Lanzi is mistaken in saying that this picture has been transported to Florence. A good account of this artist, not sufficiently known, may be found in the *Guida di Pistoja*, by Tolomei, p. 175.

we find it difficult to reconcile the glaring contradictions with which his biographer has filled his life.[1] To tell us that he lost his sight at the moment when it was prophesied on all sides that he would certainly surpass his master, is a very pathetic mode of interesting posterity in his memory; but the historians who assert this have either forgotten, or are unable to produce, the evidence required to establish the truth of this flattering prediction, so that, in all that concerns Ingegno, we are reduced to vague conjecture.

It is quite the contrary with Pinturicchio, who has left marvellous traces of his passage through Perugia, Siena, and Rome, in the works of his fertile and graceful pencil. It is idle to question whether he was really the pupil of Perugino, or whether both these artists were formed under one common master, since it is incontestable that they not only belonged to the same school, but also worked with the same aim, and drew their inspirations from the same source.

Pinturicchio's first visit to Rome was contemporaneous with that of Perugino, that is to say, at the epoch when the latter was invited to that city by the pope who has given his name to the Sistine chapel. But he had not the honour of being associated in the great work, the execution of which was confided to the most celebrated artists of the Florentine and Umbrian schools. But he

[1] These contradictions have been set at rest by Rumohr, who, moreover, saw at Assisi certain receipts for money, signed by Ingegno in 1509, together with other documents, which prove that he filled a public office in 1511; that is to say, nearly twenty years after the death of Pope Sixtus IV., who is said to have granted him a pension on the loss of his sight.—*Italienische Forschungen*, vol. ii. p. 325, and following.

displayed on a less important field more imagination and true poetry than many of those who had been preferred to him, as may be seen in his fresco in the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, where he represented the history of the discovery of the true cross by St. Helena and Constantine, and its subsequent transportation in triumph to Constantinople. Unfortunately, with the exception of the hand of Christ over the high altar, this picture has been spoilt by the restorations it has undergone, so that we can only now judge of it by the grouping and general spirit of the composition.

His success in this work was the means of procuring him the most flattering patronage, and probably led to his prolonging his residence in Rome till the accession of Innocent VIII. in 1484, for whom he painted several rooms and Loggie in the palace of the Belvedere; and, amongst other things, views of Rome, Milan, Naples, Florence, Venice, and Genoa,—a style of decoration the more admired from its being employed for the first time on so large a scale. He was indebted for these unlooked-for favours to the Cardinal Dominico della Rovere, who, having constructed a magnificent palace in the *Borgo Vecchio*, had selected Pinturicchio to decorate the interior with paintings. Unfortunately, none of the works he executed, either here or in the Belvedere, now exist; but we have less reason to regret their loss in consequence of the admirable frescos that still remain to us in three of the most interesting churches in Rome, viz. in the Araceli, in St. Onofrio, and in Santa Maria del Popolo.

In the Araceli he has represented the history of S. Bernardino of Siena, with that indefinable charm which

characterises the mystical pencil of the Umbrian artists. It is incontestably his most important work, at least as regards dimensions; it resembles, in many respects, the chef-d'œuvre of Ghirlandajo, already mentioned, in the church of Sta. Trinità at Florence, in which he has represented several incidents in the life of St. Francis; and the analogy of the subjects renders the similarity of their treatment still more striking: but the work of the Florentine artist does not possess that indefinable charm of poetry and ecstasy which makes us pardon any inequality of execution, or incorrectness of design, in that of the Umbrian painter.

In the church of Sta. Maria del Popolo, the first that greets the eye of the traveller on his entrance to Rome, Pinturicchio has left a monument of his gratitude to his benefactor, Cardinal della Rovere, in a chapel which he has decorated with several frescos; one of these represents the Madonna in adoration before the infant Jesus—a favourite subject of Perugino—and may bear a comparison for purity, grace, and suavity of expression, with the most admirable productions of the school of that great master. Near it is another chapel, also painted by Pinturicchio at the desire of Cardinal Cibo, who had selected it for his place of sepulture, and who, like his colleague Clement della Rovere, considered the frescos of this artist the most appropriate decoration for his tomb. Lastly, Pinturicchio has crowned the many marvels which this church contains,[1] by tracing on the ceiling of the

[1] In addition to the three works of Pinturicchio, and the sculptures of which we have elsewhere spoken, there is a picture by Sebastiano del Piombo which we shall have occasion to notice hereafter.

choir, behind the high altar, the Coronation of the Virgin, amidst a glorious company of prophets and sibyls, two of which are particularly remarkable from the resemblance they bear to the pure and graceful types adopted and developed by Raphael.

I have preserved a still more delightful recollection of the paintings that adorn the choir of the little church of St. Onofrio, not from their peculiar excellence, since they are inferior to those in the Araceli and Sta. Maria del Popolo, still less from the proximity of Dominichino's and Baldassare Peruzzi's frescos, but on account of the modest tomb of Tasso, who has sanctified this beautiful spot, where he poured forth his last prayers and breathed his last sigh, so that it has become a place of pilgrimage for those travellers who seek for the purest and most elevated objects which Christian Rome affords. We may kneel in the chapel where he was accustomed to pray; sit under the tree in the shade of which he loved to repose; breathe the same air, gaze on the same plains and mountains; and if we remember the history of this exalted, poetical, and profoundly Christian soul, we shall be disposed to believe that the frescos of Pinturicchio, and the image of the Virgin painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the corridor of the convent, may have sometimes procured a momentary relief to the diseased imagination of the poet.

On the accession of the infamous Alexander VI., Pinturicchio was employed by him to paint the appartamento Borgia, and a great number of rooms, both in the castle of St. Angelo and in the pontifical palace. The patronage of this pope was still more fatal to the arts than that of the Medici at Florence. The subjects represented in the

castle of St. Angelo were drawn from the life of Alexander himself, and the portraits of his relations and friends were introduced there. Amongst others, those of his brothers, sisters, and that of his nephew, the infamous Cæsar Borgia. To all acquainted with the scandalous history of this family, this representation appeared a commemoration of their various crimes, and it was impossible to regard it in any other light, when, in addition to the publicity they affected to give to these scandalous excesses, they appeared desirous of making art itself their accomplice; and, by an excess of profanation hitherto unexampled in the catholic world, Alexander VI. caused himself to be represented, in a room in the Vatican, in the costume of one of the Magi, kneeling before the holy Virgin, whose head was no other than the portrait of the beautiful Julia Farnese, the adventures of whom are unfortunately too well known. We may, indeed, say, that the walls have in this case made up for the silence of the courtiers: for on them was traced, for the benefit of contemporaries and posterity, an undeniable proof of the depravity of the age.

At the sight of the appartamento Borgia, entirely painted by Pinturicchio, we shall experience a sort of satisfaction in discovering the inferiority of this purely mercenary work, as compared with the other productions of the same artist, and we cannot but rejoice that it is so unworthy of him. Such an ignoble task was not adapted to an artist of the Umbrian school, and there is good reason to believe that, after this act of servility, Pinturicchio became disgusted with Rome, and returned to the mountains of Umbria in search of nobler inspirations; for immediately afterwards, in the year 1495, he painted

a picture for the church of Sta. Anna, which may be compared for purity and depth of expression, for the beauty of the types, and for the charm of the landscape, with the best productions of the school of Perugino.[1] It represents, as usual, the Madonna seated on a throne with the infant Jesus in her arms, St. Jerome on one side and St. Augustine on the other; an Annunciation and some half-length figures of saints, added as accessory ornaments to the principal subject, are so happily treated and so strongly impressed with the beautiful idealism of the Umbrian artists, that it is impossible not to linger for a long time before it. It is especially interesting as the expiatory-work of a naturally pure and mystical pencil, which, having been momentarily sullied by impure productions, returns with redoubled enthusiasm to its primitive inspirations, deriving even from its past error a vigour analogous to that vouchsafed to the converted sinner after having sincerely expiated his fault.

It is not easy to determine with precision what portion of the great frescos at Siena was painted by Pinturicchio, his fellow-disciple Raphael having worked there quite as much as he did. The latter, according to Vasari, made sketches and cartoons for the whole work,[2] and the Sienese have been too glad to adopt a tradition so flattering to their national vanity. We shall, however, be struck, on a careful comparison of the different parts, with certain differences in the style of the design

[1] This picture was removed some years ago to the Academia of Perugia.

[2] *Gli schizzi e li cartoni di tutte le storie furono di mano di Rafaello.* —*Vita di Pinturicchio.* In the life of Raphael, however, Vasari only mentions a few drawings and cartoons.

itself, which, although they do not interfere with the general harmony of the composition, prove that it is not all the work of the same hand.[1] But whether we recognise that of Pinturicchio, Raphael, or Pacchiarotto, this magnificent monument must always be considered to belong to the Umbrian school, even in its least important details,[2] and the remarkable success obtained on this occasion in a kind of representation rarely attempted by the Umbrian painters is a proof that, however exclusively their time may have been employed upon mystical subjects, they had nevertheless made considerable progress in the other branches of art.

It must be confessed that few artists have had the privilege of employing their pencil on so rich and poetical a subject: the object was to represent on a grand scale the principal features of a life connected with all the great events of the period, and crowned by an heroic attempt, alone sufficient to inspire the Christian artist. The hero of this pictorial history was Pope Pius II., the enlightened protector of the arts and of letters, the second founder of Corsignano, which from him took the name of Pienza, and where his taste and magnificence are still attested by many striking architectural monuments. He

[1] Two of Raphael's designs for the sacristy are in existence: one at Perugia, in the casa Baldeschi; the other at Florence, in the gallery of the Grand Duke; and are very superior to the two frescos, of which they are the originals. They have probably suffered from the difference in the proportions. Rumohr thought he discovered the pencil of Sodoma in one of the compartments; of all the conjectures his book contains, this appears the least probable.

[2] *Fu ajutato Pinturicchio da molti garzoni e lavoranti tutti della scuola di Perugino.*—Vasari, *Vita di Pinturicchio.*

had travelled through the greater part of Europe as ambassador of the papal see, had received the poet's crown from the hand of the Emperor Frederic III., who appointed him his secretary, and afterwards employed him on a peculiarly agreeable mission, that of negociating with Pope Calixtus IV. (whose successor he soon afterwards became) a general league of Christendom against the Turks: amid these negociations he was raised first to the cardinalate, and immediately afterwards to the pontificate, and saluted by the inhabitants of the countries exposed to the sword of the Ottomans as their deliverer; the enthusiasm of the crusades seemed re-awakened in Italy, a council was convoked by the Pope at Mantua, and the celestial hierarchy was increased by the addition of St. Catherine of Siena, who was then canonised, as if to give a new patron to the crusaders. In the midst of these preparations, the venerable pontiff, the victim of a zeal, which had met with little encouragement, suddenly expired at Ancona, at the very moment when a hermit had seen his soul transported to heaven by angels. Such were the remarkable events which Pinturicchio, assisted by Raphael, was employed to represent in ten compartments, which we may perhaps venture to compare to the ten cantos of a magnificent poem.

At the moment when this work approached its completion (1503) Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, who had confided the execution of it to Pinturicchio, was called to occupy the throne of St. Peter, so worthily filled by his uncle, and in commemoration of this event the artist executed the painting above the door of the sacristy, representing the elevation of Pius III. to the pontificate.

Had Pinturicchio terminated his career with this work we should not have to deplore the lamentable decline which marks almost all his subsequent productions. In the little town of Spello, between Spoleto and Foligno, is an altar-picture by Pinturicchio, in the church of Sant' Andrea, bearing date 1508, with which the traveller who, on the faith of Lanzi's authority, goes there expecting to admire a chef-d'œuvre will be most disagreeably surprised and disappointed. Indeed we had better content ourselves with judging Pinturicchio by the works of his best days—those, I mean, in the cathedral of Siena, in the Vatican, and in four of the most frequented churches in Rome, whilst the proofs of his decline are buried in obscure localities, in which his admirers are not forced to seek them: a fortunate circumstance, which may well provoke the envy of other artists.

Among the painters who worked conjointly with Perugino in the embellishment of the Sistine chapel, was one to whom it is more difficult to assign a place than any we have hitherto mentioned, in consequence of the inconceivable versatility of his pencil, which adapted itself successively to the traditions of the schools most opposed to one another: I allude to Luca Signorelli, who is described by Vasari, who had known him from his childhood, as one of the most famous and popular painters Italy had ever produced.

He commenced his career as the pupil of Pietro della Francesca, who peculiarly excelled in perspective, and it was under the auspices of this painter that he executed his first works at Cortona, his native city, and at Arezzo, the birthplace of his master: it was his skill in fore-

shortening that was principally admired in these early productions.[1]

Several works executed by him at Perugia, at the time when Perugino was already held in high esteem there, lead us to suppose that he was even then initiated in the mystical doctrines of the Umbrian school; for how can we otherwise explain the striking resemblance which exists between the style of this school and that of Luca Signorelli in the two compartments which he shortly afterwards painted in the Sistine chapel? Vasari says that these two works surpass in beauty all those which surround them—an assertion which is at least questionable as far as regards the frescos of Perugino; but with respect to all the rest the superiority of Signorelli is evident, even to the most inexperienced eye. The subject of the first picture is the journey of Moses and Zipporah into Egypt: the landscape is charming, although evidently ideal; there is great depth in the aërial perspective; and in the various groups scattered over the different parts of the picture there are female forms of such beauty, that they may have afforded models to Raphael. The same graceful treatment is also perceptible in the representation of the death of Moses, the mournful details of which have given scope to the poetical imagination of the artist. The varied group to whom Moses has just read the law for the last time, the sorrow of Joshua, who is kneeling before the man of God, the charming landscape, with the river Jordan threading its way between the mountains, which are made sin-

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Luca Signorelli.*

gularly beautiful, as if to explain the regrets of Moses when the angel announces to him that he will not enter into the promised land, all form a series of melancholy scenes perfectly in harmony with one another, the only defect being that the whole is crowded into too small a space.[1]

Beyond the precincts of the Sistine we may search in vain for another work of Luca Signorelli's, executed under the influence of the same happy inspirations. The great popularity which this brilliant success obtained for him in all the towns of central Italy, namely, at Loretto, Siena, Volterra, Florence, and Orvieto, awakened in him the ambition to equal, if not surpass, those among the contemporary artists whose works were most in harmony with the prevailing taste of the period. He devoted himself, therefore, with redoubled zeal, to the study of the nude; and the combination of anatomical truth with linear perspective, with the laws of which he was perfectly familiar, soon placed him on a footing of equality with the most famous naturalistic painters of the Florentine school; and his habits of luxury making a rich patron necessary to him, he sought to gain the favour of Lorenzo di Medici by presenting him with certain pagan divinities, whom he took care to represent perfectly naked, in order that the charms of paganism and naturalism might be united in the same subject.

His style, in taking this new direction, gained in force what it lost in purity; and it is on this account that his fresco of the Last Judgment, in the cathedral of

[1] D'Agincourt, pl. 173.

Orvieto, is still so much admired;[1] it is there that the representation of the nude, foreshortening, and grandeur of design, find their legitimate application. Michael Angelo has even introduced several of the details of this work into his Last Judgment in the Sistine chapel. But however honourable this circumstance may be to Luca Signorelli, it can only be considered the evidence of an external progress. He became at last so completely absorbed in anatomical studies, that the development of the human body was the only part of art that appeared to him worthy of attention; and this monomania was carried so far, that in order to console himself for the loss of a son whom he tenderly loved, he caused the body to be stripped from head to foot, that he might draw minutely every muscle, and thus secure to himself the perfect resemblance of his child.[2]

We now come to the artist who at once crowns and closes the Umbrian school, and for whom was reserved the glory of carrying Christian art to its highest perfection. The reader will understand that we are about to speak of Raphael.

Descended from a family of artists who enjoyed some celebrity in the city of Urbino,[3] Raphael came to Perugia about the year 1500, and immediately enrolled himself among the scholars of Perugino, then at the height of his glory. Thus placed at the source of inspirations most in harmony with the natural bent of his genius,

[1] D'Agincourt, pl. 156.

[2] Vasari, *Vita di Luca Signorelli.*

[3] On the works attributed to Raphael at Urbino, see Rumohr, Part III. § 2. We must, however, a little distrust his partiality and admiration for all that the Berlin Gallery possesses.

the young Raphael identified himself so completely with the manner of his master, that the works of the one can hardly be distinguished from those of the other.

During the ten years that followed his first entrance into this school, all the works of Raphael, whether in Umbria, in Tuscany, or in Rome, were marked with the mystical impress which characterises its productions, as well as with that indefinable charm which it is as impossible to describe as to imitate.

He began by scrupulously following the steps of his master, not venturing to depart either from his style, types, or the traditional grouping of his compositions, as may be seen in the picture of the Crucifixion in the gallery of Cardinal Fesch at Rome,[1] and which the most experienced eye would take at first sight for a work of Perugino's. According to all probability the Sposalizio of the latter, which was formerly at Cremona, also served as the model for that painted by his disciple for a church at Citta di Castello, and now in the Brera at Milan.[2]

Raphael had scarcely attained his twenty-first year[3] when he completed the Sposalizio, a subject peculiarly appropriate to the pure and poetical imagination which

[1] Now in the possession of Lord Ward.—*Translator's note.*

[2] In spite of the superiority of Rumohr to Quatremère de Quincy as a critic, I do not hesitate to prefer the opinion of the latter, that the Sposalizio is posterior to the Crucifixion. The individuality of the artist appears to me to manifest itself much more in the Sposalizio. The date 1504 is inscribed on the cornice of the temple which forms the background of the picture.

[3] The small picture belonging to Count Tosi at Brescia, some original drawings preserved in the Academia delle belle Arti at Venice, and one of great beauty in the Ambrosian library at Milan, must all be considered to belong to the same period.

he at that time possessed. This composition was neither invented by himself nor his master; nor was it one of those traditions bequeathed by the first Christians to the generations destined to assist in the revival of art. On the contrary, it was a legend made use of for the first time by the artists of the middle ages, and it was peculiarly suited to the pencil of the Umbrian painters, on account of its naive simplicity and profound mystical signification. Ghirlandajo had already made it the subject of one of his frescos in the choir of Santa Maria Novella; but, as a painter of the naturalistic school, he was contented to place the citizens of Florence in the cortège of St. Joseph and the holy Virgin. How great is the difference between this prosaic conception and that of Raphael, who, rather than have recourse to studies taken immediately from nature, has preferred a certain uniformity in the types of the young girls who accompany the Virgin. The more we examine this work, at once naive and sublime, the more we feel that he intended in the airs of the heads, the attitudes, the well-selected choice of the draperies, and all the other accessories, to surround his two principal figures with everything that could give the idea of celestial purity.

The following year he made his first journey to Florence, where naturalism was still in all the pride of the triumph obtained over Savonarola and his partisans. But, far from being infected by its influence, Raphael chose his friends among the vanquished party, and formed the closest intimacy with Fra Bartolomeo, who held the memory of Savonarola in peculiar veneration. His friendship for Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, two years younger than

himself,[1] was, perhaps, of a more tender character, and was certainly as lasting, for we find that long afterwards, when Raphael was at the height of his glory, he used every effort to attract him to Rome.

The influence that his genius exercised on these two artists is an important fact in his history, and in that of the Florentine school, the naturalistic tendencies of which peculiarly required to be counterbalanced by the spiritualism of the Umbrian. It has been asserted that he instructed Fra Bartolomeo in perspective, and gained from him in return greater vigour in the tone of his colouring; but when we compare their works, we are struck with something more than these superficial points of resemblance, and perceive that the imagination of Raphael has exercised a much deeper influence on certain of the productions of his friend, who appears to forget for a time his severe and grandiose style, and to aspire to a delicate modulation of form and a grace of contour which were certainly not the distinguishing qualities of his school. As a proof of the success he attained, it would be sufficient to cite a Madonna in the gallery of Cardinal Fesch, which offers an example of the harmonious fusion of the two styles in a single picture; but while I admit the importance of this beautiful work, I consider the original drawings in the rich collection of the Grand Duke to prove the question of influence in a still more satisfactory

[1] Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, born in 1485, was then about twenty. He was the son of Dominico Ghirlandajo and the nephew of Davide, who, having worked for many years in France, accumulated sufficient wealth to enable him to give up painting on his return to Florence. He had another uncle of the name of Benedetto, also an artist, who wasted his time in fabricating inferior mosaics.

manner. These show how completely Fra Bartolomeo was the disciple of Raphael. Some of the sketches are so graceful, that we could believe them to be executed under the immediate inspiration of the latter,—that is to say, from models by his own hand; and the strongest proof of the advantages derived by the Florentine artist from this connexion, is the contrast of the soft and mellow style adopted by Fra Bartolomeo at this time, with the somewhat angular style of the drawings and pictures belonging to the other periods of his life.

The influence of Raphael over Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, and transmitted to the disciples of the latter, may easily be recognised in all the pictures of this school which exist at Florence or Pistoja: to these we shall have occasion to allude hereafter.

During his residence in the capital of Tuscany, from 1505 to 1508, Raphael paid two or three visits to his native city and the studio of his old master; and as he never left Perugia without executing some work, the Umbrian traditions, which might otherwise have been forgotten amid so many other inspirations, were kept alive in his mind: this explains in some degree his persevering adherence to the style of his predecessors,—a perseverance which may be called heroic, if we consider the various temptations by which he was surrounded. As this short interval of three years corresponds, according to our view of the subject, with the most interesting period of his career, it is important scrupulously to notice all the masterpieces which his pencil then produced, and of which the greater number are now dispersed in the different capitals of Europe.

The first in date after the Sposalizio is the picture of the Assumption, which has passed from the church of St. Francesco at Perugia into the gallery of the Vatican, and is still an imitation of Perugino, if the term can be applied to such a painter as Raphael.[1] At the same time we find him occupied upon three other great works in the same city, namely, a Madonna for the nuns of St. Antonio;[2] the same subject, with several accessory figures of large and small dimensions;[3] and lastly, the famous fresco in the church of San Severo, visited by all travellers on account of the similarity which exists between this early work and the upper part of the Dispute on the Sacrament in the Stanze of the Vatican. At the same period he painted for the Duke of Urbino the St. Michael combating the demons, and the St. George on horseback, both of which are now in the Louvre; and these miniatures, remarkable for a grace and finish rarely equalled even in caligraphy, are proofs of the flexibility and universality of his genius.

Immediately after the completion of the fresco of San Severo, he painted for the chapel of the Baglioni family in St. Bernardino at Perugia, the Deposition from the Cross, now in the Palazzo Borghese at Rome. In many respects this work may be considered as one of the purest specimens of the traditional style of the Umbrian school; several types are identically the same, and the airs of the heads, as well as the attitudes, recall the

[1] The lower part of this picture was finished twenty years later by Luca Penni and Giulio Romano.

[2] Vasari, *Vita di Rafael.*

[3] This picture is now in England.

strikingly pathetic expression which distinguishes certain of Perugino's figures: but what strength of individuality manifests itself amid these reminiscences! Above all, if we seize the artist's thought as displayed in his first sketch of this picture, before the freshness of his imagination had time to cool under the labour of the execution! The original sketch, particularly remarkable for the beauty of the heads, is preserved in the gallery of the Uffizi at Florence.[1]

Three small chiaroscuro figures, representing Faith, Hope, and Charity, originally formed the lower part of this picture, from which they have since been separated and are now in the Vatican, where, notwithstanding their insignificant dimensions, they are worthy of the position they occupy among the chefs-d'œuvre of the gallery. I do not think, upon the whole, that the hand of Raphael has ever produced anything more perfect than these small compositions; here we behold him in his true element, for such allegorical subjects were the triumph of the Umbrian school, and Raphael's poetical imagination and purity of soul enabled him to surpass the most successful of his predecessors, not excepting Perugino himself.

From 1506 to 1508 the fertility of Raphael's pencil seemed to grow in proportion to the increasing enthusiasm his works excited. It was at this time that, in order to satisfy the demands of his numerous admirers,

[1] I do not understand the reasons which have induced Rumohr to disparage this picture of the Deposition, and to employ so much subtilty to prove that it was not painted by Raphael himself, but by one of his friends under his superintendence. He says that he cannot otherwise explain the cold indifference with which he viewed it. But this may be accounted for from various causes.

as well as to escape the reproach so justly incurred by his master, he occupied himself with multiplying and varying the representations of the Virgin, with a success hitherto unexampled, which must in some measure be attributed to the extraordinary devotion he had always entertained for her.

Two of the earliest compositions of this kind were probably the pictures which he executed for the Duke of Urbino, immediately after the St. George and the St. Michael just alluded to; but these, and several others, have disappeared, and their loss would be irreparable to the friends of art were it not for the existence of twelve authentic masterpieces, all executed within the short period of two years, and now dispersed over the whole of Europe. Eight of these it has been my good fortune to behold; and the progressive development of the artist's powers in each makes it desirable to mention them in the following order.

The Virgin of the Duke of Alba[1] is a composition full of earnestness, the prevailing character of which rivals the immediate inspirations of the Umbrian school, so capable of expressing the indefinable presentiment of future evil. In the infant Christ, with his left arm round

[1] This picture is in London, in the magnificent gallery of Mr. Coesvelt, the liberal and enlightened possessor of many treasures of art, to which strangers are not denied access. It might almost be supposed that certain of the aristocracy fear that their collections will lose their value from being too easily seen, as *bons mots* lose their zest from being too frequently repeated.——This picture is now in possession of the Emperor of Russia. ——Had Rio been alive at the present day, he would probably have modified the severity of this remark, as many collections are now most liberally thrown open to the public.—*Translator's note.*

his mother's neck, and seizing with his right the cross of reeds with which the little St. John presents him kneeling, we have in a scene of an apparently infantine character an image of the agony which awaited the Son of God in the Mount of Olives: the imagination is powerfully struck with the contrast between the tenderness of the maternal caresses and the ignominy of Calvary; and we may assert that no picture is more adapted than this to exalt the imagination of those who desire to meditate on the mysteries of the Passion.

The Virgin known under the name of *la belle Jardinière*, forms one of the principal ornaments of the Louvre; this work breathes the greatest innocence, simplicity, and happiness. If the other may be compared to an elegy, this possesses all the charm and freshness of an idyl. There is not the slightest tinge of melancholy, either in the landscape or in the countenances. Here, then, we have variety: with regard to progress it is observable in the tone of the colouring, and in the improvement in the type of the Virgin, in which we already recognise an immense advance on the part of the artist towards that ideal he soon afterwards attained.[1]

The Virgin of the Palazzo Tempi, formerly at Florence, and now in the gallery of the King of Bavaria, is

[1] It has always been, and continues to be believed, both in France and Italy, that the picture of *la belle Jardinière*, bought by Francis I., is identical with that painted by Raphael for the city of Siena (Vasari, *Vita di Raf.*). Rumohr, who, in spite of his knowledge, is sometimes the dupe of his partiality for the Berlin gallery, maintains, with pertinacity, that the picture Vasari mentions is the one purchased for the King of Prussia, and seems to regard this identity as adding to the value of the work.

remarkable for the greater boldness of its design: we see that the artist now begins to give a freer development to his genius. The position of the infant Christ, whom his mother presses tenderly to her bosom, offers certain technical difficulties to be overcome; and in the incorrect foreshortening of the hand on which he rests we discover the uncertainty of a first attempt. In grace and poetry this picture is, however, perfect.

The Madonna di Canigiani[1] is a more elaborate composition; it represents the Virgin with the infant Christ, who caresses the little St. John held by St. Elisabeth: the latter raises her eyes towards Joseph, who watches them leaning on his staff. In this delicious family group the figures are arranged in the manner most calculated to interest and affect the spectator, and the most insignificant details are in perfect harmony with the aim that the artist has evidently proposed to himself.

In the tribune at Florence, where the greatest marvels of art are to be found in juxtaposition, are two Holy Families by Raphael, at the sight of which the admirers of his first manner are so transported with delight, that they forget all the other masterpieces by which they are surrounded. It seldom happens that both these works command an equal degree of admiration; that

[1] This picture was presented to the Elector Palatine on the occasion of his marriage with the daughter of the Grand Duke Cosimo III., and is now in the Munich gallery. The authenticity of it has been contested; and it has been affirmed that Vasari's description of it rather applies to a picture in the Palazzo Rinuccini at Florence. Rumohr, who saw this pretended treasure of the Florentine marquis, has completely disposed of its pretensions.

known under the name of the Madonna del Cardellino exercises such an empire over the imagination, and even over the senses of the spectator, that it is difficult for him to tear himself away from it. Even those who have seen *la belle Jardinière* feel themselves transported into a new world at the sight of this beautiful picture, which long haunts their imagination like the echo of some celestial melody. We may assert, without fear of contradiction, that Christian art, properly so called, has never reached a higher point.

The Madonna of the Palazzo Colonna, that of the Palazzo Gregori at Foligno, and the Madonna di Pescia, better known as the Madonna del Baldacchino, probably belong to the beginning of the year 1508, and must have been, if this supposition be correct, the last works he executed before his departure from Florence. What renders this conjecture the more probable is, first, the resemblance of the type of the Virgin in these three pictures, a resemblance which almost approaches identity; secondly, the more grandiose style of the forms; and, lastly, the necessity Raphael found himself under of leaving to others the care of completing the head of the Virgin in two of these pictures, which will explain the strange and artificial arrangement of the hair both in the Madonna del Baldacchino and in that of the Palazzo Gregori, an arrangement which seems to have been adopted for the express purpose of spoiling the effect of these fine works.

The Madonna of the Palazzo Colonna, now in the possession of the King of Prussia, has not been, like the

two others, completed by an inferior hand; but, notwithstanding this advantage, the palm must be given to the Madonna del Baldacchino. Raphael was aware, when he worked at this picture, that it was destined to be placed in the Santo Spirito, the finest church in Florence, and regarded as the masterpiece of Brunnelleschi. For such a purpose, something more was required than one of those graceful holy families with which his pencil had been long familiar. What was required was a solemn and imposing work, worthy to be the object of public devotion. With regard to dimensions, Raphael had as yet undertaken nothing equal to it, and it may be considered as his first step in the new career on which he was now about to enter; but it is of great importance to remark that he executed this picture under the pure inspirations of the Umbrian school, inspirations which he was then able, without difficulty, to unite with boldness and grandeur of design, as well as with progress in the technical and subordinate parts of his art. It was not, therefore, the conviction of the incompatibility of these two things that caused the defection of which we are about to speak.

The Baldacchino, which surmounts the throne on which the Virgin is seated, is evidently an imitation of Fra Bartolomeo, whose influence is also perceptible in several other parts of the picture, in which we may observe an unusual freedom of design. It is also possible that Michael Angelo's cartoon of the War with Pisa, completed in 1506, may have had some effect upon Raphael. The four noble figures of the fathers of the church presuppose a hand already practised in drawing the contour with a certain energy, and it is well known that

the famous cartoon of Pisa first brought this freedom of outline into repute.

A profound impression had been made upon Raphael by the excellence and originality of the works of Michael Angelo, and he could not fail to perceive the great results that might arise from following in his path. To diffuse over the whole surface of the human body, by the relief and play of the muscles, the life hitherto concentrated by the greater number of artists in the countenance, might appear to him an undertaking worthy of a great painter, and very compatible with the transcendental aim of the Umbrian school. It is, however, much more probable, that Raphael was not aware of the alteration which his manner imperceptibly underwent, and that the variations we perceive in it arose more from the versatility of his imagination than from the conviction of his reason; and it is important to remark, that if this versatility showed itself during his long residence in Florence, it was only to discurse into some portions of the domain of the beautiful, with which he was as yet unacquainted. His pencil was never contaminated with the paganism which grew more and more into favour with the artists and engravers of Florence; and we do not find from any of his biographers that he followed the example of his contemporaries in seeking classical inspirations from the study of the antique statues, which had been transported with great cost into the gardens of the Medici.

This noble repugnance for all that had a tendency to degrade Christian art explains to us why Raphael found so few illustrious protectors in Florence; for we can

hardly give this title either to Taddeo Taddei, who afforded him such generous hospitality, or to his friend Lorenzo Nargi, for whom he painted the Madonna del Cardellino; nor even to Agnolo Doni, who always had an eye to economy in the acquisition of objects of art, and whose sole patronage was the order he gave for the portraits of himself and his wife, now placed together in the Tribune,[1] and which are of great value in the history of art from their being Raphael's first works, in a style hitherto unattempted by him. His progress must from the outset have been very rapid, for the portrait of Maddalena, probably executed the last, is already very superior to that of Agnolo, and there is a brilliancy in the carnations which can only be the result of a rapid execution. As studies of form and character, the two portraits of monks, formerly in the convent of Vallombrosa, and now in the Academia delle belle Arti, and which certainly belong to the same period, are of peculiar importance: this, however, will be better understood when we compare them with the analogous productions of the following period.

When Raphael was called to Rome by Julius II. on the recommendation of his relation, the architect Bramante, he had already become ambitious of painting one of the rooms of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence, undismayed by such formidable competitors as Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci; and as he had done nothing to entitle him to the protection of those who had influence in Florence, he had addressed himself to his uncle at

[1] These portraits are not in the Tribune, but in the Pitti palace. See Kugler's *Hand-Book of Italian Painting.—Translator's note.*

Urbino, praying for a letter of recommendation to the Gonfalonier of the Republic,[1] in whom the choice of the candidates was vested. It was on the 11th of April, 1508, that he expressed this fruitless wish for the first time, and a few months later he had the unlooked-for happiness of finding himself placed on a theatre more worthy of his genius, and of presenting himself as the continuator of the works of the Umbrian school at the Vatican.

He commenced by painting the ceiling and the four walls of the room called *della Segnatura*, on the surface of which he had to represent four great compositions, which embraced the principal divisions of the encyclopædia of the period; namely, Theology, Philosophy, Poetry, and Jurisprudence.

It will be conceived, that to an artist imbued with the traditions of the Umbrian school, the first of these subjects was an unparalleled piece of good fortune; and Raphael, long familiar with the allegorical treatment of religious compositions, turned it here to the most admirable account; and, not content with the suggestions of his own genius, he availed himself of all the instruction he could derive from the intelligence of others.[2] From these combined inspirations resulted, to the eternal glory of the Catholic faith and of Christian art, a composition without a rival in the history of painting, and

[1] The letter he wrote to his uncle may be seen in the Appendix to Quatremère de Quincy's life of Raphael, No. 4. This letter has been inserted by the translator at the end of the chapter.

[2] A friend of Richardson's saw at Rome a letter from Raphael to Ariosto, asking his advice on this occasion.—*Beschreibung der Stadt Rome von Plattner, Bunsen*, &c., 2ter b. p. 331.

we may also add without a name; for to call it lyric or epic is not enough, unless, indeed, we mean, by using these expressions, to compare it with the allegorical epic of Dante, alone worthy to be ranked with this marvellous production of the pencil of Raphael.

And let no one consider this praise as idle and groundless, for it is Raphael himself who forces the comparison upon us, by placing the figure of Dante among the favourite sons of the Muses; and, what is still more striking, by draping the allegorical figure of Theology in the very colours in which Dante has represented Beatrice: namely, the white veil, the red tunic, and the green mantle, while on her head he has placed the olive crown.[1]

Of the four allegorical figures which occupy the compartments of the ceiling, and which were all painted immediately after Raphael's arrival in Rome, Theology and Poetry are incontestably the most remarkable. The latter would be easily distinguished by the calm inspiration of her glance, even were she without her wings, her starry crown and her azure robe all having allusion to the elevated region towards which it is her privilege to soar. The figure of Theology is quite as admirably suited to the subject she personifies; she points to the upper part of the grand composition, which takes its name from her, and in which the artist has provided inexhaustible food for the sagacity and enthusiasm of the spectator.

[1] *Purgat.* canto 30, vers. 31–33. It is hardly necessary to mention that white, red, and green were the emblems of the three theological virtues.

This work consists of two grand divisions, Heaven and Earth, which are united to one another by that mystical bond, the sacrament of the Eucharist. The personages whom the church has most honoured for learning and holiness are ranged in picturesque and animated groups on either side of the altar, on which the consecrated wafer is exposed. St. Augustine dictates his thoughts to one of his disciples; St. Gregory, in his pontifical robes, seems absorbed in the contemplation of the celestial glory; St. Ambrose, in a slightly different attitude, appears to be chanting the Te Deum; while St. Jerome, seated, rests his hands on a large book, which he holds on his knees. Peter Lombard, John Scot, St. Thomas Aquinas, Pope Anacletus, St. Bonaventura, and Innocent III., are no less happily characterised; while, behind all these illustrious men, whom the church and succeeding generations have agreed to honour, Raphael has ventured to introduce Dante with his laurel crown, and, with still greater boldness, the monk Savonarola, publicly burnt ten years before as a heretic.

In the glory, which forms the upper part of the picture, the three Persons of the Trinity are represented, surrounded by patriarchs, apostles, and saints: it may, in fact, be considered in some sort a *resumé* of all the favourite compositions produced during the last hundred years by the Umbrian school. A great number of the types, and particularly those of Christ and the Virgin, are to be found in the earlier works of Raphael himself. The Umbrian artists, from having so long exclusively employed themselves on mystical subjects, had certainly attained to a marvellous perfection in the representation

of celestial beatitude, and of those ineffable things of which it has been said that the heart of man cannot conceive them, far less, therefore, the pencil of man portray; and Raphael, in surpassing them all, and even in this instance in surpassing himself, appears to have fixed the limits, beyond which Christian art, properly so called, has never since been able to advance.

Must we, then, consider the decline of this transcendent genius to have commenced immediately after the completion of the Dispute on the Sacrament, at the very time when a new world seemed to open before him, when he was placed at the centre of all Christian inspirations, under the immediate patronage of the court of Rome, and consequently on a theatre on which he might command the admiration of the whole of Christendom?

It will be time to reply to these questions when we have occasion to speak of the Roman school, which was founded by Raphael at this time, when he irrevocably renounced the Umbrian traditions in order to place himself in harmony with the changes the public taste, and perhaps his own heart, had undergone.

The contrast between the style of his first works and that which he adopted during the ten last years of his life is so striking, that it is impossible to regard the one as the development of the other. We find an evident solution of continuity—the former faith has been abjured and a new creed embraced. Consequently, the admirers of his first manner regard the productions posterior to the epoch of which we are speaking with indifference, or even with a sort of repugnance, while the reverse may

be remarked of the exclusive partisans of his second manner.

This remarkable dissidence has struck all who have occupied themselves seriously with the history or the theory of art. It has been the opinion of some, that Raphael's early pictures would naturally have a greater attraction for the habitually passive mind, because they imperceptibly transport it to a region of innocence, serenity, and eternal peace; whilst the later works of the artist, being executed with a fuller consciousness of his powers, and, therefore, possessing more life and expression, and also greater grandeur and variety in the forms, would be more pleasing to the active imagination. It is thus that the celebrated Goethe accounts for the different impressions produced by the two styles of Raphael.[1]

Others have explained it in a still more singular manner. For example, Rumohr, whose explanation leads to the most unlooked-for conclusion, namely, that in Raphael's early pictures the classical taste predominates, and modern taste in those of his later manner. According to him, the artist of antiquity always sacrificed movement and expression to the mathematical instinct of harmony in every combination of lines, figures, and forms; and this sentiment had been partially adhered to amid the darkness of the middle ages, as is proved by many monuments in which we find this idea of configuration constantly prevailing. But in the course of the fifteenth century the beauty of lineal arrangement had been almost entirely lost sight of in the Florentine school, while, on

[1] Kunst und alterthum, 3 b. 1 t. p. 145–148.

the contrary, it had always been cultivated with special care in that of Perugino; and it was from having inherited this classical tradition, forgotten elsewhere, that Raphael was able to give such an indefinable charm to his early works. In the following period, his aim becoming different, his manner naturally underwent a change: the symmetrical element of the beautiful gave place to the picturesque element—the fusion and harmony of colours, of tone, aërial perspective, chiaroscuro, large masses of light and shade, finely managed gradations, and all the other technical resources of the art, naturally acquired an æsthetical importance unknown before.[1]

It is impossible to imagine anything more admirably calculated to elucidate the theory of the fine arts than this luminous distinction between symmetrical and picturesque beauty; but its application in this instance by Rumohr is not equally felicitous, it is even in manifest contradiction with what he elsewhere says of the kind of merit which peculiarly characterises the Umbrian school.[2] A certain naive purity may, indeed, be common to it, and to the productions of the best period of classical art; but in the works of Perugino and his disciples there prevails an element which I am tempted to call *seraphic*, and which is entirely independent of symmetrical arrangement. It is this element, introduced for the first time into art by Christianity, which gives the pictures of the Umbrian artists such a superiority over all others, and

[1] *Italienische Forschungen*, 3ter th. p. 81, 82.

[2] *Ein sehnsuchtvoll schwarmerischer Ausdruck welcher die Umbrischen Gemälde von denin anher Schulen unterscheidet.*—It would be impossible to characterise this school with greater felicity or precision.

produces the effect of a fine poem on minds capable of appreciating this order of beauty. The enthusiasm of the spectator depends, therefore, on feelings which place him more or less in harmony with the object before him. Every imagination endowed with sufficient activity creates a world for itself, and seeks among the productions of the fine arts beings with which to people it. The admirer of antiquity delights in all that recalls to his mind the robe of the senator or of the archon, the bas-reliefs of Trajan's column, or the Parthenon. The philosopher of Nature will extol the Florentine or the Venetian school, according to the more or less religious tendency of his system; and if we may hazard a conjecture on the subjects most congenial to the executioner, the butcher, or the low voluptuary, we should point to images of torture, or the nudities which abound in modern collections, as objects of their predilection.

The pious solitary, also, creates to himself a world beyond the narrow limits of his cell; and if, in order to people it, he were called upon to choose between the productions of the different schools which have divided the domain of art, his choice would instinctively fix itself on that of Perugino; and if he were further required to name the artist who had most excelled in graceful contours and ideal forms, the palm would undoubtedly belong to Raphael, but only up to the period of his defection, the deplorable consequences of which we shall shortly have to notice in another chapter.

The translator, not possessing a copy of Quatremère de Quincy's work, has extracted this letter, in the hope that it may prove interesting to the reader, from Passavant's *Rafael von Urbino*, vol. i. p. 529:—

Al mio carissimo Zeo Simone de Batista de Ciorla da Urbino, in Urbino.

Carissimo quanto Patre.

Io ho ricevuta una letera per la quale ho inteso la morte del nostro Illmo. S. Duca, al quale Dio abi misericordia al anima e certo non podde senza lacrime legere la vostra letere, ma transiat, a quello non è riparo, bisogna avere pazientia e acordarsi con la volonta de Dio. Io scrissi l'altro dì al Zio prete, che mi mandasse una tavoletta, che era la coperta dela nostra donna dela prefetessa,[1] non me la mandata, ve prego voi li faciate a sapere quando ce persona che venga che io posso satisfare a Madonna, che sapete, adesso uno avera bisogno di loro, ancora vi prego carissimo Zeo che voi voliate dire al preto e ala santa che venendo la Tadeo Taddei fiorentino, el quale n'avemo ragionate più volte insiemo, li facine honore senza asparagno nisuno, e voi ancora li farete careze per mio amore che certo li so ubligatissimo quanto che uomo che viva. Per la tavola non ho fatto pregio e non lo farò se io porò perche el sera meglio per me che la vada a stima e impero non ve ho scritto quello che io non po-

[1] This lady was Giovanna della Rovere. In a letter of recommendation, written for Raphael to Pietro Sodorini, Gonfaloniere of Florence, she signs herself "Joanna Feltria de Rovere, Ducissa Sarae et Urbis Prefectissa."

seva e ancora non ve ne posso dare aviso, pur secondo me a ditto el patrone de dita tavola dice che me dara da fare per circha trecenti ducati d'oro per qui e in francia fatto le feste forse ve scrivero quello che la tavola monta che io ho finito el Cartone, e fato pascua serimo a ciò. Averia carǫ se fosse possible davere una lettera di recomandatione al Gonfalonero di Fiorenza dal S. Prefetto, e pochi dì fa io scrissi al Zeo e a Giacomo da Roma me la fesero avere me saria grande utilo per l'interesse de una certa stanza da lavorare, la quale tocha sua Signoria de alocare, ve prego se è possibile voi me la mandiate che credo quando si dimandera al S. Prefetto per me, che lui la fera fare e a quello me ricomandate infinte volte come suo anticho servitore e familiare, non altro aricomandatione al Maestro . . . . . e a Redolfo e a tutti gli altri . . . . . xxi de Aprila, MDVIII.

El vostro raphaello dipintore in Fiorenza.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the great Reform attempted by Savonarola in the Sciences, the Arts, and in all branches of Public Education—His Efforts to purify the Minds and Imaginations of Children by the prohibition of all Licentious Publications in Poetry, Music, and Painting—His Ideas of the Beautiful—Enthusiasm which he inspired in the most illustrious Scholars and the greatest Artists of the age; in Pico della Mirandola, Poliziano, Lorenzo di Credi, Fra Bartolomeo, Luca della Robbia, &c.—Imposing Celebration of the Triumph of Christian Influences on the day of the Carnival—Intrigues of the Bankers and Usurers to destroy the credit of Savonarola—His Rehabilitation under Julius II. and Paul IV.

THE name of Savonarola has become popular among the partisans of republican ideas and the adversaries of the Catholic hierarchy, and every time his name is now mentioned it seems only to recall the idea of an ignominious death inflicted upon one of the most energetic defenders of civil and religious liberty. This error has been perpetuated in consequence of the pains that have been taken to fix the attention of posterity on two facts which have been considered an epitome of the whole public life of Savonarola, namely, his refusal to absolve Lorenzo di Medici when at the point of death, unless he previously promised freedom to his country, and the boldness with which he is believed to have cast off the yoke of the pontifical authority. Without examining to what extent these allegations are confirmed or contradicted by authentic contemporaneous documents, let us first consider the subject in the light which more immediately interests us,

and as the friends of art and Christian poetry take our share in that spirited, dramatic, and imposing contest, boldly maintained by a simple monk in the face of all Italy against the feelings of his age and country. His object was to re-establish the kingdom of Christ in the hearts, minds, and imaginations of men, and thus to extend the benefits of the redemption to all the faculties and productions of the human mind. The foe against which he exerted every effort of his soul, and all the force of his eloquence, was Paganism, the impress of which he found in everything, in the arts as well as in the manners, in the sentiments as well as in the actions, in the convents as well as in the schools of the period.

When he resolved at the age of twenty-two to embrace the monastic life, his predilection for St. Thomas Aquinas decided him upon entering the order of the Dominicans, to which this learned Doctor had himself belonged; but he took up his abode amongst them with the full determination to remain all his life a lay-brother, in order by this means to escape that medley of profane and scholastic studies which had led the monks so fatally astray from the original intentions of their founder. He, notwithstanding, took his vows in the convent at Bologna, and even surmounted his repugnance to give instruction in the philosophy of Aristotle, when required to do so by his superiors; he was, however, careful to abridge the more unprofitable questions, and to bring forward the superiority of the Holy Scriptures over the philosophical authorities whenever the opportunity presented itself.

The study of God's word contained in the Old and New Testament became henceforth the prevailing pas-

sion of his life, and at the end of a few years his language, until then wearisome and inanimate, became eloquent and convincing, not only in the pulpit, but in his more familiar discourses.[1] In a provincial chapter held at Reggio, the celebrated Pico della Mirandola was so astonished at his eloquence and enchanted with the beauty of his soul, that from that time he felt his society indispensable to him;[2] and it was in consequence of the enthusiastic terms in which he mentioned him immediately afterwards to Lorenzo di Medici, that the latter recalled Savonarola to Florence, and placed him as lecturer in the convent of San Marco.

In this retreat, under a large damask rose-tree, the principal ornament of the garden, he began his course of preaching before an audience at first comparatively small, but which soon became so considerable that it was necessary to remove into the church of the convent; this also was found too confined for the continually increasing concourse of strangers who flocked to hear him, so that in the following year (1490) Fra Girolamo, who had just been elected prior of San Marco, gained permission to assemble a still greater number in the spacious area of the cathedral of Florence.

His first sermons were appalling exigeses on certain passages in the Apocalypse, from which he deduced, with

[1] The first attempt of Savonarola as a preacher was so unsuccessful, that at the end of Lent the number of his auditors did not exceed twenty-five. He announced to them himself that henceforth, instead of preaching, he should devote himself exclusively to the study of the Holy Scriptures.

[2] *Che non gli pareva poi poter vivere senza lui.*—Burlamachi, *Vita di F. G. Savonarola*, edit. de Venise, p. 39.

the accent and authority of a prophet, the approach of a great crisis in the church and unheard-of tribulations for those nations who did not seek a refuge in penitence from the wrath of God. [1] The invasion of Italy by the French, and the occupation of Florence by a foreign monarch, having verified those predictions which especially related to the Florentines, and furnished Savonarola with the opportunity of figuring as their liberator, gratitude and veneration for the messenger of God were joined to the enthusiasm they had already felt for the preacher, and this produced such a powerful and contagious effect on all classes of the population, that they imagined themselves transported back to the purest ages of the primitive church.[2] In order to participate in the benefits of this spiritual food so freely dispensed by heaven, the inhabitants of the towns and neighbouring villages deserted their abodes, and the rude mountaineers descended from the Apennines and directed their steps towards Florence, where crowds of pilgrims flocked every morning at break of day, when the gates were opened, and became the objects of a charity truly fraternal, the citizens vying with each other in the exercise of the duties of Christian hospitality, embracing them in the streets as brothers, even before they were acquainted with their names, while some of the more pious received them by forty at a time into their houses.

When we consider that this enthusiasm continued for seven consecutive years, during which time it was necessary for him to preach separately to men, women, and

[1] *Talchè pareva proprio una primitiva chiesa.*—Burlamachi, p. 39.
[2] Ibid.

children, from the impossibility of admitting them all at one time into the cathedral; that all this unheard-of success was obtained amidst the cries of rage of the Moderate faction,[1] who denounced him daily at the court of Rome, and threatened him publicly with punishment, we are at a loss which to admire most in Savonarola, his inexhaustible fluency as an evangelical orator,

[1] This was the name given to the enemies of Savonarola; his partisans were styled *Piagnone*, or *Weepers*.

[There were three political factions in Florence striving for supremacy. The first was named Frateschi (Brethren) or Piagnone (Mourners). These were the zealous advocates of liberty, who had not only united for the restoration of the republic, but went about constantly and loudly lamenting the corruption of morals and the decay of prosperity in the city. To counteract the vice and the ruin that prevailed, they proposed the severest discipline. They were considerable in numbers, character, and talent. At their head was Savonarola.

The second party was named by the first (having no name of its own) Arrabbiati (the Frantic), or Compagnacci, from the assistance they derived from companies of young nobles who enlisted themselves in its service. These aristocrats, under the cover of political partisanship, indulged violent and unbridled passions. Their aim was to establish an oligarchy. They were disgusted with the pseudo-irresponsible monarchy of the Medici; but they dreaded equally the extreme democracy of Savonarola's views. Besides which, the then and honest monk would have restrained by legislation the license which they would have wished to set above and beyond law. This restraint could never be admitted by the members of a privileged social order.

The third party, denominated Bigi (Grey), was that of the Medici. They were not strong enough openly to oppose the others, but promoted their own cause by secret intrigues among the magistrates. They joined the Piagnone in the ballot when the contest was between them and the Compagnacci.

Of the three parties, the first and the third sided against the second; and the second dreaded the first more than the third. There was more sympathy between the two extremes than there was between the mean and either opposite. And thus it has always been, and is, in the political arena.—*The Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola.* Collected from original sources, p. 155. London, 1843.]—*Translator's note.*

his facility in rising superior to popular fury, or his almost superhuman reliance on that divine succour which he believed could never fail him.[1]

A divine intervention was indeed required to purify all that had been polluted by paganism; for there was not a single branch of the arts or sciences, not a single faculty of the human mind, that had escaped this general contagion. In consequence of this frequent prostration of the intellect to paganism, the ignominy of the cross had become distasteful; and Burlamachi tells us that Savonarola found Florence full of noble, skilful, ingenious, and learned persons, who had not only lost all belief themselves, but ridiculed those who retained, and still more those who defended their faith.[2] There were even artists of the highest reputation who frankly avowed their infidelity, and those amongst them who, in order to avoid scandal, were more guarded, generally confined their profession of Christianity to external practices. The professors to whom the charge of public education was intrusted, poisoned the youthful mind by systematically drawing its attention to the fables of the Greek mythology, or to the heroes of the ancient republics, without even allowing them to suspect that Christianity also possessed its own legends and heroes superior to them all. Still more, they selected among the pagan works those most calculated to corrupt the mind and the

[1] Certain priests and monks even refused absolution to all who attended the sermons of Savonarola. See the Sermon for Easter Tuesday (1495), in the collection printed at Florence the following year, one vol. in 4to.

[2] See the end of the Sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent (1495), in the collection before named.

morals; and, notwithstanding all that the contemporaneous historians tell us of the corruption of this age, we are hardly prepared to find among the works whose suppression Savonarola boldly demanded in the schools, the very licentious productions of Tibullus and Catullus, and even Ovid's "Art of Love,"[1] which, however, is quite edifying when compared with another collection, whose title alone reveals its infamy; against this publication the holy preacher formally demanded an edict of prohibition:[2] to such a height had the perverseness of the professors and the fatal blindness of families grown!

This system of profane education was continued under another form in the superior instruction of the universities and cloisters, without even excepting those belonging to the Dominicans, although the study of scholastic philosophy was forbidden by the constitutions of S. Domenico, except in the cases of papal dispensation.[3] The logic of Aristotle, overladen with new subtleties, subjected to its processes, barren and coldly regular, even theology itself, a science from its nature peculiarly independent of such control; and the authority of Holy Scripture was only acknowledged in proportion as it accorded with that of the peripatetic philosopher. Nor was this all; the study of the Scriptures, and especially of the Old Testament, was so shamefully neglected, that the small number of those who occupied themselves in perusing them were naively asked, what

[1] See the end of the Sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent, 1495, in the collection already cited.

[2] See the end of the Sermon for the Third Monday in Lent, *ibid.*

[3] Sermon for the Third Monday in Lent.

possible good could be derived from the knowledge of events so long since accomplished? A question so absurd and ignorant, that we should scarcely give it credence, had it not been addressed to Savonarola himself during his noviciate, by a monk who was in other respects exemplary, and animated by the best intentions.[1]

The eloquence of the pulpit had also degenerated into disputations purely scholastic, and the preachers most in favour, making a monstrous medley of the Gospel and logic, came, their heads stuffed with all the subtleties of the schools, to perplex the minds of their hearers with barren disputations, while the things of God and of faith were neglected and forgotten.[2]

Blessed, indeed, were then the poor in spirit; for when Savonarola burst forth with the abundance and happy choice of his biblical quotations, it was in these simple souls they re-echoed, like repeated peals of thunder; and the same burning coal appeared to have refined their hearts and purified their lips. It was no longer in his own name that he threatened the people with approaching and terrible chastisements, and that he sought to exorcise the demon of paganism with which the arts and sciences were possessed; but it was in the name of the prophets, who had denounced woe to whoever should bow the knee to idols. Amos was to him the type of that rude and

[1] See the Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

[2] *Sono le suttilità dei filosofi come polvere. . . . . Fanno di questa filosofia e della Scrittura Santa e logica un mescuglio, a questo vendono sopra li pergami, e le cose di Dio e della fede lasciano stare.*—" Sermon for the Fourth Sunday in Lent."

energetic simplicity which God so frequently makes use of to confound the wisdom of the wise;[1] and the prophecies of the herdsman of Tekoa, by Savonarola's just application of them, appeared to relate especially to the intellectual idolatry in which Florence was then plunged.[2] When, in speaking of the unpardonable sin of the people of Israel, the prophet reproaches them with having drank of the cup of the condemned—*vinum damnatorum biberunt*,—his interpreter tells the Florentines, that by this cursed beverage is meant Paganism, with all its ancient relics, its voluptuous and profane ceremonies.[3] "They that swear by the sin of Samaria"—*qui jurant in delicto Samariæ*,—are, on the one side, the young Florentines, carried away by the pride of logic and philosophy; on the other, the professors of theology, who only study vain subtleties, which supply constant food for scholastic disputes.[4] Again; they that say, "the manner of Beersheba liveth," are the learned, who make to themselves an idol of science, and who only take human reason for their guide in their efforts to arrive at a first cause: the prohibition laid by Isaac upon his son Jacob, not to take a wife from among the daughters of Canaan, was a prophetic warning to the Christians not to seek for truth in the books of the philosophers.[5] Among the seven plagues of Egypt there were at least three to which the imagination

[1] *Dio non elesse un filosofo, ma uno pastore e simplice uoma e voleva che a lui fosse creduto.*—"Sermon on the Second Sunday in Advent."

[2] Amos, i. 6–8.

[3] Sermon for the Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent.

[4] Sermon for the Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

[5] Sermon for Good Friday.

of Savonarola found means to attach analogous significations;[1] the Jews, who loathed the manna in the wilderness, and sighed after the fleshpots of Egypt, prefigured Christians, who, having the word of God at their command, neglected it, in order to devote themselves to profane studies;[2] and in the recital of the miraculous draught of fishes, when the apostle Peter complained of having toiled the whole night in vain with his companions,[3] this complaint, applied to the sterility of modern preaching, signified, that in consequence of the exclusive study of rhetoric and philosophy, the light of faith had become obscured, and been succeeded by a fearful night, during which the preachers had cast their nets without taking anything,—that is to say, without saving souls: because, in the midst of this extraordinary abundance of sermons, the Spirit of God had ceased to give life to eloquence, and the orators had become more than ever estranged from the knowledge of the faith. With such a steadfast purpose, and such fervent zeal, we can understand how irresistible and pathetic Savonarola became whenever he recommended the study of the Holy Scriptures to his auditors, or spoke of the consolations he himself derived from them.

[1] See the very remarkable Sermon for the Tuesday in Holy-week, in which will be found a decisive opinion on indulgences, and on the pope's right to grant them. Certainly, Protestants would not have so much admired Savonarola if they had read this sermon, and several others in the same collection.

[2] Sermon for Wednesday. It is one of the finest, and it dwells almost entirely on the sacrament of the Eucharist; and the most inveterate enemies of Savonarola have never contested its orthodoxy.

[3] St. Luke, v. 5.

"Believe," said he to them, "believe in the all-
"sufficiency of the Word, and in the wisdom of Christ,
"who has left you his precepts so clearly expressed, that
"no human wisdom is required to explain them. It has
"been said that logic and philosophy confirm the soul in
"faith, as if the superior light needed to borrow lustre
"from that which is inferior. Recollect that philosopher
"at the council of Nice, whom the bishops puffed up
"with scholastic learning, vainly endeavoured to con-
"vince by syllogisms, and who being afterwards per-
"suaded to embrace the truth by an unlettered believer,
"addressed to the former these remarkable words: *Vobis*
"*pro verbis verba dedi*—I have answered your arguments
"with other arguments . . . . . Go into all the schools
"of Florence, you will find professors paid to teach logic
"and philosophy, you will find instructors for all the
"arts and sciences, but not one to undertake the teaching
"of the Holy Scriptures. . . . . Dost thou not perceive,
"vain philosopher, that in resting faith on the profane
"sciences thou degradest and dishonourest, instead of
"elevating and aggrandising it? Call to mind the history
"of David going against the giant Goliath; lay aside the
"weighty armour of logic and philosophy, and arm
"thyself after the example of the apostles and martyrs
"with a lively and simple faith.[1] . . . . What ineffable con-
"solation may the Christian derive from the study of the
"word of God! Man, fatigued by the long pilgrimage
"of life, sometimes sits down and reposes on the way, in

[1] Sermon for the Third Monday in Lent. The translation is literal, with the exception of a few phrases which I have ventured to transpose.

" order to refresh and fortify himself with this viaticum;
" and then he enjoys, it may be said, the presence of
" Christ, his well-beloved, and finds comfort in the tears
" of tenderness which he sheds at the spectacle of the
" mercies of God.[1] . . . . Oh, Florence! deal with me
" as thou wilt. I have mounted the pulpit this day, to
" tell thee that thou wilt not destroy my work, because
" it is the work of Christ. Whether I live, or whether I
" die, the seed I have sown in the hearts of men will
" not the less bring forth its fruits. If my enemies are
" powerful enough to drive me from thy walls, I shall not
" be grieved; because I shall find some desert where I
" can take refuge with my Bible, and enjoy a repose
" which thy citizens will be no longer able to disturb."[2]

To certain superficial philosophers all this appears but a momentary conflict between an ignorant and fanatic monk on the one side, and the march of human intellect, which nothing is able to arrest, on the other. Nevertheless, this monk was at least as well versed as the most learned of his adversaries in those profane studies, which he did not wish entirely to overthrow, but only to make subordinate to the study of Christianity. He was as well acquainted as they were with the annals of Greece and Rome, but considered them neither more glorious nor instructive than those of the nations who had since appeared in the world, and displayed the banner of the cross. Even among the historians of antiquity he refused pre-eminence to those who, like Livy and Thucydides, had only written the history of the past, and

[1] Sermon for the Fourth Tuesday in Lent.
[2] Sermon for the Third Tuesday in Lent.

he claimed it for the Jewish historians, who had combined in the same book the recital of the past with the figurative history of the future.[1] It must be confessed that there is something sublime, and profoundly Christian, in this repugnance for all that is gone and cannot exist again: the instinct of perpetuity is inseparable from that of immortality, and the last has been so clearly developed by Christianity, that the light in which historical studies were once considered has undergone a complete change in the minds of those who have reached the highest step of this development. This may be even remarked in the imperfect essays on universal history attempted by ecclesiastical writers in the earlier periods of the middle ages; it may be seen in all its characters of perfection and unity in the incomparable discourse of Bossuet; and the germs of it may be found in various passages of the sermons of Savonarola. In order to counteract the enthusiasm of the learned, whose attention was constantly fixed on classical antiquity, he pointed out in the East the sad ruin of the Greek race, destroyed by an intellectual leprosy, rendered incurable by schism, and equally incapable of throwing off either the yoke of the barbarians or that of error.[2] In the West, far from seeking to divert the minds of his audience from the spectacle of Roman greatness, he delighted rather to unfold before them its imposing picture; but it was only to contrast more forcibly the conquest of the eternal city by Christ, who

[1] Sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent.

[2] *Che nacque per l' heresie e li peccate dell' oriente e dei Greci? Sono andati tutti in vastità e sotto gli infedeli.*—"Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent."

had placed it all at the feet of a simple fisherman; and then he seemed to burst forth into a hymn of triumph as he paraphrased these words of the prophet Isaiah: *Civitatem sublimem humiliabit, conculcabit eam pes pauperis, gressus egenorum*[1]—The lofty city shall be humbled, she shall be trodden down by the foot of the poor and by the steps of the needy.

Savonarola could expect but little encouragement in his endeavours to give a Christian direction to public education, from a generation who had habituated themselves to regard the discovery of a Greek or Latin manuscript as one of the greatest benefits that heaven could confer; and it was necessary to wait till all these learned men, of whom he complains that their hearts were hard as stone, had descended one after another into the tomb,[2] and in the meanwhile prepare the minds of the people by institutions worthy of Christianity, for the advent of a new generation on whom he invoked the special blessings of God.

A very striking collection might be made of all Savonarola's touching addresses to the children who formed a part of his audience. The sympathies of the preacher were never more deeply affected than when he spoke to this innocent and cherished portion of his flock; he called upon them to reap the fruits of his labours in their day,

[1] Sermon for the Fourth Tuesday in Lent.—*See* Isaiah, xxvi. 5, 6.

[2] *Guarda tutti coloro che oggi seguitan la dottrina di quelli filosofi, gli troverai tutti duri come pietre.*—"Sermon for the Fourth Saturday in Lent."

I tiepidi e maximè i vecchi che hanno il vizio nella parte intellitiva, non si possono convertire.—"Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent."

and to watch over the future destinies of their country;[1] but in the meantime he prepared for this glorious future by adapting to their capacities the great truths of the faith, and by suggesting salutary reforms in domestic education; he exhorted mothers to suckle their own offspring, and not to neglect the most sacred of all duties by employing mercenary nurses, who transmitted to them their own vices, and thus corrupted them from the cradle.[2] He told fathers that they were bound to give their sons at an early age that degree of instruction without which their natural disposition could not be afterwards developed;[3] and it was especially in this elementary education, in which the study of the dead languages was comprised, that Savonarola wished to lay a foundation and give a direction to the mind more in harmony with the aim of Christian communities.

Too enlightened to entertain the idea of proscribing altogether the masterpieces left by the nations of antiquity as so many luminous mementos of their passage through the world, he willingly admitted them as auxiliaries of modern civilisation, and useful instruments in the cultivation of the imagination and of the taste; but although these adventitious ornaments might be allowed to the Christian artist, it was essential that the foundation and walls of the edifice should be exclusively borrowed from

[1] Sermon for the Third Sunday in Lent.

[2] *Voi fate male, perchè voi gli fate allatare da gente grossa, e diventano poi spiriti grossi, e chi diventa libidinosa, chi iracondo chi stizzoso, perchè gli fate allatare ancora dalle schiave, e quel primo latte da grande inclinazione al fanciullo*, &c.—"Sermon for the Saturday in Holy Week."

[3] From this it appears that neither the author of *Emile*, nor the school of philanthropists, can claim originality for this idea.

Christianity. It was his wish that the professors of Florence should make their pupils acquainted with the genius of Homer, Virgil, and Cicero, so that the dense medium of a translation might not be interposed between these great luminaries and themselves; but in his estimation the genius of certain of the fathers of the church had still more depth and elevation, and thus any inferiority of style in their writings was counterbalanced by these more solid advantages. He wished that the best works of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and particularly the *De Civitate Dei*, might be placed on an equal footing with the profane authors; "*in order*," he says, "*that youth might not receive a lesson of paganism without at the same time acquiring a knowledge of Christianity, and be thus simultaneously taught eloquence and truth.*"[1] The same motive made him anxious to fill the memory of children with holy recollections, by impressing on them from their earliest years the history of those saints and martyrs who had honoured the church by the practice of virtues much more heroic than those of the great men celebrated by Plutarch.[2]

The evil occasioned by the abuses introduced into public education was aggravated and rendered still more

[1] See the end of the Sermon for the Third Tuesday in Lent.

[2] This is a subject on which he most frequently dwelt. See the Sermon for the Fourth Tuesday in Lent. Burlamachi says, p. 93, that the works of St. Leo and St. Jerome began to be used for instructing children in grammar, and they began to explain the treatise of St. Ambrose *De Officiis*. He adds, that Savonarola had written a pamphlet to deter the young from reading the licentious poets. In the memorial addressed by the Florentine magistrates to the court of Rome, it was said that Savonarola wished the youth of Florence to be instructed in the history of the Redeemer and the saints.—Bartoli, *Apol. di Savonarola*, p. 331. Fir. 1782, in 4to.

dangerous from the encouragement artists, devoted to pagan subjects, received from their patrons and other sources. The ideas which painters and sculptors had hitherto conceived of the beautiful had insensibly undergone a change since the monuments of pagan art, in the gardens of the Medici, had become almost objects of worship. On the other hand, naturalism, encouraged by the increasing corruption of manners, had taken entire possession of the holy places, and the profanation committed by the monk Lippi was renewed every day; that is to say, portraits of young girls, generally of the most notorious character, were introduced into altar pictures under the form of the Madonna, the Magdalene, or St. John, and around these a noisy crowd of curious and profane spectators collected, without any regard for the sacrifice of the altar.[1]

In these representations everything was done with the view of depraving the imagination of the spectators; attractive, undraped forms, offensive to modesty, were displayed; and not only was the traditional costume of the Virgin and other holy women disregarded, but that in which they were represented gave them the air of courtezans. It was for this that Savonarola reproached the painters in accents of the most vehement indignation, demanding of them what right they had thus to display their vain conceits in the churches; and he was never wearied of telling them that the holy Virgin was dressed simply and modestly, as befitted one of lowly birth, and that the celestial beauty of her countenance was but a

[1] Sermon for the Second Saturday in Lent.

reflexion of the inward holiness of her soul, which made St. Thomas say that no man had ever looked upon her with the eyes of desire.[1]

It appears that this kind of license had already caused great evil, since Savonarola affirmed that if the artists had known, as well as he did, all the ill effects that had resulted from it to the souls of the simple, they would have shrunk in horror from their own works. Nevertheless, their pencils were still more licentious when employed in the decoration of palaces and private houses; it was in these that pagan art became perfectly unbridled, and conveyed to the minds of children through the eye what was elsewhere conveyed through the ear. The Madonnas placed in the oratories, instead of edifying the family when assembled for prayer, often produced quite a contrary effect; and if a pious citizen in his paternal solicitude expressed his disgust for all these lascivious images, and requested the representation of a Virgin who in aspect, age, and character, might serve to protect them against every impure thought, then the malicious artist would paint one with a long beard.[2]

The sacrifice of all subjects which shocked modesty in its most sacred asylum, I mean even under the maternal eye, was the first pledge exacted by Savonarola from the newly converted parents. To enforce this, he

[1] *Io vi dico ch' ella andava vestita come poverella semplicemente e appena se gli vedeva il viso. . . . Voi fate parer la Vergine Maria vestita come una meretrice, &c.* — "Sermon for the Second Saturday in Lent." "On the Beauty of the Virgin," see the Third Friday in Lent.

[2] The artist who committed this abuse was Nunziata. He excelled in making the fireworks used at the festival of St. John. This fact is related by Vasari in the life of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo.

drew a comparison between their laxity in this important matter and the severity of Aristotle, who had been enabled, by the light of pagan philosophy alone, to point out in his *Politics* the danger which resulted from placing indecent images before the eyes of children.[1]

But what good could result from the destruction of all profane monuments, if the principle from which they sprang were not attacked at the root, and if the imaginations of the people were not completely emancipated from those antichristian influences, by which they had been hitherto governed? To attempt such a work, one of the boldest ever conceived by the human mind, needed nothing less than the genius of Savonarola, and his unshaken faith in the divinity of his mission.

Without going back to the circumlocutions of the analytical method, he had observed that the decline in the arts was principally owing to the decline of religious feeling among Christians; and from thence he concluded that an improvement in the one would necessarily lead to a reform in the others. He set himself, therefore, to inculcate on his auditors, as strenuously as possible, the necessity of an inward piety and its close connexion with their spiritual wants, and to explain to them the high signification of the ceremonies practised in the church, and the sublime part which art was called upon to take in them.[2] By thus placing in its full light the true sense, whether allegorical or mystical, of all these customs and institutions, so marvellously adapted to the

[1] Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent.

[2] *Tu vedi quel Santo là in quella chiesa e di: io voglio far buona vita ed essere simile a lui.*—" Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent."

most simple capacities, he reopened to the artists a mine as pure as it was prolific, which their predecessors were very far from having exhausted.

But the old race of Florentines were not less obdurate on this point than on that of profane literature; and their example was almost universally followed by the generation which immediately succeeded them. It was then solely on the generation placed, so to speak, between infancy and manhood, that Savonarola rested his hopes of the future;[1] hopes which he cherished during eight consecutive years, with an unparalleled zeal, and which sustained him under the severe trials caused by the implacable hatred of his enemies.

To prepare and secure the triumph of art, poetry, and Christian faith, for a new era which was to open gloriously with the sixteenth century, and at Florence, rather than elsewhere, on account of her superior holiness,[2] such was the aim which Savonarola proposed to himself in impregnating the heart and imagination of youth with the exquisite perfume of a tender child-like piety, the fragrance of which is generally prolonged through advancing years.

His success so far surpassed his expectations, that he could only himself attribute it to the miraculous intervention of divine mercy, and he was never more pathetic than when he poured forth his gratitude to the Author of

[1] He forbad children to be brought to him under ten years of age.

[2] *Firenze è la città di Dio. . . . . Qui si fa più bene che nell' altre.* —"Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent."

Vien quà, Firenze, tu di che sei povera; io dico quanto alle ricchezze spirituali, tu sei la più ricca città d'Italia.—"Sermon for the Eve of Palm Sunday."

this blessing.[1] The joy he experienced was so great, that it seemed an anticipation of his heavenly reward. It may be seen from several passages in his discourses that the innocence of early childhood inspired him with an indescribable feeling of delight, almost approaching to adoration; he said that a child, who preserves himself free from sin after he has attained the free use of his will, acquires such great purity of heart and affections, that the holy angels frequently come and converse with him.[2] He also caused this cherished portion of his flock to offer up prayers to God, either for strength for himself when he felt conscious of exhaustion, or to obtain virtuous magistrates for Florence when they were proceeding to new elections.[3]

It was a remarkable spectacle for the Florentines to behold the young, formerly so noisy, undisciplined, and rebellious, submit themselves to a rule of life so contrary to their habits and natural impetuosity, and devote themselves with such earnestness for seven consecutive years to the exercises of religion, as to become indifferent to all other subjects. In their homes they either recited the rosary or read the office of the holy Virgin, according to their respective ages; and, above all, they conformed themselves according to their different capacities to the course of Christian education recommended by Savonarola; abroad, they attended all his sermons, and on the

[1] See at the end of the Sermon for the Tuesday after the First Sunday the beautiful paraphrase of this verse of the Psalms: *Ex ore infantium et lactantium perfecisti laudem.*—This sermon is admirable throughout.

[2] Sermon for Palm Sunday. It was composed expressly for children.

[3] Sermon for the First Thursday in Lent.

eve of solemn festivals went together to make garlands of olive, and, seated on the grass, divided into groups, which formed so many choirs, they chanted lauds to the glory of God or of the Virgin Mary, while those who passed near declared that it resembled a scene in paradise.[1]

These lauds, composed for the greater part by tolerably good poets, and chanted to well-known airs, were one of the most efficacious means employed by Savonarola for the project of regeneration he had in view. He knew that the custom of assembling together every Saturday evening after nones in the principal churches of Florence, to chant canticles in alternate choruses before an image of the Madonna, which they afterwards adorned with drapery, amid a concert composed of the organ, voices, and bells, might be traced back without interruption to the thirteenth century, and had acquired so much importance that a leader had been appointed, with the title of *Capitano dei Laudesi;* he also knew that, during the whole period of the interdict of 1376, men, women, and children, crowded every evening into the churches, to console themselves by these chants for the temporary suppression of public worship; and he had himself seen a company of musicians, originally organised at the expense of the state to accompany the *caroccio* in time of war, and the priors and the gonfalonieres in the time of peace, assemble every Saturday on the piazza of the Palazzo Vecchio, to play national airs in honour of the justice rendered to the people during the preceding week.[2] On the other hand,

[1] Sermon for Palm Sunday.

[2] *L'Osservatore Fiorentino*, vol. i. p. 139, and following.

he was not ignorant of the growing favour bestowed upon the licentious songs composed for the dances and orgies of the Carnival; and from his own personal observation, combined with historical tradition, he was led to draw the legitimate conclusion that music exercised great power over the imaginations of the Florentines, and might be employed to mitigate the mischief caused by the satanic raptures of certain poets. He resolved, therefore, to extend his reform to this branch of the arts.

Here, again, the difficulty was insuperable as regarded the old, from whose memory it was impossible to extirpate all the impurities which they had accumulated as ornaments; it would have been an easier task to have cleansed the Augean stables. His plan of reformation, consequently, could only be carried out by means of the young; but within these limits his triumph over profane music was so complete that he was able to celebrate it during the Carnival, amid pious hymns and the benedictions of an immense majority of the people.

In the reform which he proposed in music, he had two principal objects in view: the first was to restore the use of the simple, expressive, and majestic chants, which had been used by the Church from time immemorial, as the *Ave Maria Stella*, or the Veni Creator, which was so happily adapted to the wants of the moment.[1] Se-

[1] *Vorrei ancora che voi cantaste qualche volta dei Canti della chiesa come Ave Maria Stella, o Veni Creator, &c.*—"Sermon for the Third Monday in Lent."

In the Sermon for the Second Saturday he expresses himself still more plainly: *Lasciate andare i Canti figurati, e cantate i canti formi ordinati dalla chiesa.*

condly, he desired to substitute more decent airs in the place of those to which the court of Lorenzo di Medici had been accustomed to sing the lauds which the latter had composed, with a purity of style not to be expected from the author of drinking and dancing songs, the cynical grossness of which disfigures the collection of his works.[1] In order that the people might not be disgusted with these novel compositions, care had been taken to adapt these hymns to the most popular airs, such as the air *Del Fagiano, Della Cicala,* &c.; and this condescension had spared the poets the trouble of arranging choruses expressly for them. Savonarola did not formally prohibit either the words or the music; but by employing infantine voices to repeat the sweet melodies which, as a perfume, had exhaled from the heart of their pious ancestors, he led the Florentines into an appreciation of their real value, and this important branch of Christian art shared in the ameliorations introduced into every other.

Not to acknowledge in Savonarola the powerful logician, the accomplished orator, the profound theologian, the daring and comprehensive genius, the universal philosopher, or rather, the competent judge of all philosophies, would be giving the lie too boldly to history and to his contemporaries. We may possibly consider ourselves more likely to be right in refusing to him that

[1] The lauds composed by Lorenzo di Medici are ten in number. His mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, to whom he was indebted for all his sentiments of piety, also composed several.

exquisite sentiment of the beautiful in the imaginative arts, which is not always the privilege of the greatest genius, and which implies a sensibility of soul and a delicacy of organisation as rarely to be met with in a recluse devoted to the mortifications of the cloister; and, nevertheless, it may be affirmed without any exaggeration, that all this was found united in a very high degree in Savonarola.

From his first entrance on the monastic life, he had imposed upon himself the obligation of surrendering everything which might excite his affections too strongly; and this sacrifice was never so painful as when he felt it necessary to part either with some image of a saint or some holy book ornamented with miniatures.[1] In the model convent which he proposed to found at Florence, and which was the Utopia most dear to his heart and imagination,[2] the lay-brothers were to occupy themselves particularly in works of sculpture and painting; and being thus placed close to the sanctuary, at the very source of the purest inspirations, they were to be considered as vestals charged with the guardianship of the sacred fire. He knew by his own experience how much the pencil of truly Christian artists was calculated to assist the soul in shaking off its lethargy, and facilitate its aspirations towards God; for he was often to be seen on his knees passing long hours in prayer before an

[1] Burlamachi, pp. 58, 59.

[2] *Idem*, pp. 70, 71. This subject is introduced in the concluding portion of the Sermon for the First Sunday after Easter. The convent was to contain two hundred chosen monks, who were to be placed in Florence, as a centre of light to illuminate the whole of Italy.

image of the crucifix in the Church of *Or Sanmichele.*[1] Besides all this, it may be affirmed without fear of contradiction, that his theory of the beautiful, as expressed in fragments scattered through several of his sermons, surpasses in originality and depth all that writers of the same century have said on this subject, in repeating, with more or less servility, the trivialties of Aristotle or Quintilian. Instead of dwelling on his ingenious developments of the *true*, the *beautiful*, and the *good*, considered with reference to Christian preaching,[2] I shall content myself with quoting one of his most remarkable digressions, addressed more particularly to artists: —

"Your ideas," he said, "are stamped with the grossest "materialism . . . The beauty of things composed con- "sists in the proportion of their parts, or the harmony of "their colours; but in that which is simple, beauty is "transfiguration, it is light: it is, then, in something "beyond the visible that we must seek for the essence "of supreme beauty . . . The more nearly the creature "participates in, and approaches to, the divine beauty, "the more beautiful it is; because the beauty of the body "depends, in great measure, on the beauty of the soul: "for instance, if you select two women of equal beauty "from among this audience, she who possesses the "greatest holiness will excite the greatest admiration

[1] Bartoli, *Apologia di Savonarola*, p. 7.

[2] These ideas may possibly be considered platonistic, but they at least prove that, even in the writings of antiquity, Savonarola knew where to place his affections.

" in the spectators, and the palm will even be awarded " to her by men of carnal minds."[1]

He was no less keenly alive to the beauties of nature, and he understood better than any one the sense of those beautiful words of St. Paul:—*Tam multa genera linguarum sunt in hoc mundo, et nihil sine voce est.*[2] Fra Giacomo di Sicilia, who had the happiness of accompanying him in nearly all the excursions he made during a short stay in Lombardy, was often himself transported by the enthusiasm of Savonarola, when any imposing and varied scene burst upon their sight; they then made choice of some secluded and enchanting spot, and, seated in the shade upon the grass, opened the book of psalms, in order to find out an appropriate text for all these marvels of plain and mountain, which also in their language express the glory and greatness of God.[3]

More than one recollection of this kind had been bequeathed by Savonarola to the monks of S. Dominico at Fiesole, with whom he had frequently wandered over the surrounding hills. On these occasions he gave a free course to the celestial poetry which swelled in his soul, and excited in the minds of those who heard him sensations analogous to those experienced by the two disciples at Emmaus, when they asked one another if their hearts did not burn within them while Jesus talked with them by the way.[4] One delightful day had more espe-

[1] The Third Friday in Lent. Sermon on Christ's discourse with the woman of Samaria.

[2] " There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."—1 Cor. xiv. 10.

[3] Burlamachi, p. 65.

[4] Luke, xxiv. 13–25.

cially remained engraven on their memories; it was that on which Savonarola, forming the pith taken from a fig-tree into little white doves, distributed them among the monks, explaining to them at the same time, with the eloquence of a prophet and a poet, the twofold intervention of this mystical bird: first, in the covenant which God made with Noah when he came out of the ark; and, secondly, in that which he afterwards sealed with the blood of his Son.[1]

We need not, then, be surprised to find artists and poets among the most devoted partisans of Savonarola, since it was in their ranks that the most ardent sympathy would naturally burst forth, not only because his eloquence kindled the sparks which inflamed their minds, but also because he restored them to the eminent position from which they had been insensibly displaced. I do not think that history has ever presented us with a hero whose name has been transmitted to posterity, surrounded by a more imposing circle of illustrious men of all descriptions; and we can hardly persuade ourselves that it is only of a simple monk we are speaking, when we enumerate the philosophers, poets, artists of every kind, architects, sculptors, painters, and even engravers, who all enthusiastically offered themselves, each in his vocation, as the docile instruments of his great social reform.

At their head we must place the celebrated Pico della Mirandola. Even that universal scholar, who had already understood and admired so many things, was struck dumb with astonishment the first time he heard this

[1] Burlamachi, p. 65.

extraordinary man. As the friend of Lorenzo di Medici, his admiration cannot be suspected; and this circumstance also adds weight to the testimony of Angelo Politiano, who, notwithstanding his predilection for profane literature, the especial object of Savonarola's invectives, yet represents him as a man equally remarkable for holiness and science, and who preached heavenly doctrines with unusual eloquence.[1]

The canon Benivieni, a poet of the platonistic school, still more closely connected with the court and prejudices of the Medici, published notwithstanding, at the time when the storm was beginning to gather over the head of the preacher, a most energetic defence, both of his doctrines and his prophecies.[2]

But there was no class of citizens who furnished so great a number of champions religiously devoted to his cause as the artists. Amongst these he found not only friends, but apostles and martyrs; and while some aspired to the glory of dying with him, others regarding the light of art as extinct, resolved, in the excess of their grief, to bid an eternal adieu to their pencil. All persevered in their enthusiasm until their death, thus honouring both their profession and human nature by a fidelity which the triumph of their enemies rendered difficult and even perilous.

In taking a survey of the various branches of art, we discover that Savonarola had not only obtained a ge-

[1] Insignis et doctrinâ et sanctimoniâ vir cœlestisque doctrinæ prædicator egregius.—*Epistolar*, lib. iv. epist. 2.

Pico della Mirandola and Politiano both died in 1494, before the catastrophe which closed at once the life and mission of Savonarola.

[2] This work was printed in 1496.

neral ascendancy over all, but had even succeeded in gaining over the most distinguished among the artists. The finest work of the first engraver of intaglios that Italy has produced is a bust of Savonarola, which is still to be seen in Florence.[1] The most important successors of Maso Finiguerra, who invented engraving towards the middle of the fifteenth century, were Baldini and Botticelli: the first of these never sullied his burin by a licentious or profane work; and the second, celebrated both as a painter and as the commentator of Dante, engraved *The Triumph of the Faith of Savonarola*, with a degree of perfection which he had never attained in his other works, and carried his enthusiasm for his hero to such a height, that at his death he entirely gave up painting, resolved rather to die of hunger than to resume the use of his pencil.[2]

The more gentle, but less enthusiastic Lorenzo di Credi, brought the tribute of a pure talent exclusively imbued with holy inspirations; and we feel still more interest in him than in the other reformers, on account of his representing the brilliant and original school of Andrea Verocchio, to which Leonardo da Vinci had already belonged.[3]

[1] The artist's name was *Giovanni delle Corniole.* The first school of this kind of art was founded in 1458 by Lorenzo di Medici; it was continued under the protection of Pietro di Medici, and afterwards transferred to Rome, where, under Leo X., Pietro di Peccia, the rival of the Greek artists, flourished.

[2] Vasari, *Vita di Sandro Botticelli.*

[3] The resolution which he took to spend the remainder of his days in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, where he died in 1530, at the age of seventy-eight, was probably owing to the deep impression which the death of Savonarola had made upon him.

There was in the convent of San Marco a miniature painter named Fra Benedetto, an inheritor of the traditions bequeathed to it by the beato Angelico da Fiesole; this monk was the most courageous and devoted of al lhis followers. On the day when the party of the *Moderates* besieged the church, demanding with cries of rage the death of Savonarola, Fra Benedetto armed himself from head to foot in his defence, and only relinquished his purpose on his master's representation that it was to spiritual arms alone a monk had any right to resort; and when, at length, the assailants having penetrated into the convent, carried their victim before the judges, who were prepared to pass sentence of death upon him, Savonarola was obliged to use for the last time his authority as prior of the convent, in order to prevent this generous monk from participating in his fate.[1]

Baccio della Porta also made one of the five hundred citizens who on this day entered the convent of San Marco to defend it against the assailants. He had been an assiduous listener to the preaching of Savonarola, and no artist had entered more completely into the views of the latter on the necessity of a reform in art; and his dejection was extreme when he saw this extraordinary movement terminated by the ignominious death of its author. Neither art nor fame having any longer charms for him, he buried his talents and his grief in a convent

[1] *Fra Benedetto fece grande istanza di voler andar seco; e ributtandolo i ministri, egli pur importunava per voler andare; ma il padre Girolamo gli si voltò dicendogli: Fra Benedetto, per obedienza non venite, perciocchè io ho a morire per amore di Cristo.* — Burlamachi, p. 169.

at Prato, where he took the religious habit in 1500; and it is for this reason he is better known in history under the name of Fra Bartolomeo.[1]

Luca della Robbia, the inventor of a new process for the preservation of bas-reliefs, had founded in his own family a mystical and original school, and of such fertility that Tuscany may be said to have been filled with its productions. His two brothers, Agostino and Octaviano, were his first scholars; but they reflected much less honour upon him than his nephew Andrea della Robbia, who, in his figures of angels, virgins, and saints, appears to have been always under the inspiration of the Umbrian traditions, which made him more accessible than any other Florentine sculptor to the impressions Savonarola endeavoured to produce on the Christian artist. His success was immense in the family of Andrea, two of whose sons embraced the monastic life in the convent of San Marco, where they received the religious habit from the hands of the prior himself; and the three others having remained in the studio of their father, assisted him in modelling medallions representing the profile of Savonarola, whom they considered in the light of a new prophet.[2]

The stranger who traverses the streets of Florence for the purpose of admiring its various monuments, cannot fail to have his attention arrested by a palace of the most grandiose architecture, the magnificent cornice of which is justly considered as one of the greatest

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Bartolomeo.* All that he says betrays the courtier of the Medici.

[2] Vasari, *Vita di Luca della Robbia.*

marvels of art. This striking edifice is the Strozzi palace, and the architect who so magnificently crowned the summit was Cronaca, the bosom friend of Savonarola, whose doctrines and unhappy fate had taken such possession of him, that in his latter years he could talk on no other subject; so that, according to Vasari, it almost amounted to madness.[1]

A multitude of conversions of equal importance took place in the other classes of the citizens; among them was remarked that of the soldier Marco Salviati, who, in the time of danger, never quitted the side of Savonarola, but defied his most inveterate enemies, and was even bold enough to draw a line with his lance on the *piazza*, which he forbade the furious populace to pass over.[2] Among the noble Florentines there were instances of devotedness quite as chivalrous; that of the brave and pious Valori may be mentioned amongst others, who, at the moment when he was exhorting the people to take up arms in defence of *the pastor of Florence*, as he always called Savonarola, was basely murdered, with his wife and child, by hired assassins.[3]

With the energetic co-operation of so many men, rendered illustrious either by genius, birth, or public services, Savonarola believed, that after the unheard-of

[1] *Gli era entrato nel capo tanta frenesia delle cose di Savonarola, che altro che di quelle sue cose non voleva ragionare.*—Vasari, *Vita di Cronaca.* We must not forget that the biographer had his motives for speaking in this manner.

[2] *Fece un segno in piazza con un' arme in asta, dicendo: Chi passerà questo segno proverà quanto possano le armi di Marco Salviati.*—Burlamachi, p. 155.

[3] Burlamachi, p. 160.

success which had attended his preaching during Lent in 1496, he might venture to make a still bolder attempt, and astonish the Florentines with a spectacle to which their eyes were little accustomed. On Palm Sunday a long procession paraded the streets, being intended as a representation of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The number of the children alone amounted to eight thousand. In one hand they held a small red cross, and in the other a branch of olive, with the exception of those who were employed to collect alms for the Monte di Pietà. Next came the different religious orders, with the clergy; then an innumerable multitude of men, of all ages and conditions; lastly, young girls clothed in white, with garlands on their heads, and followed by their mothers, who closed the procession. Never in the memory of man had such a spectacle been seen in Florence; the assemblage of this immense population—the baptismal robe worn by children of both sexes, who sang, alternately, psalms and lauds composed for the occasion by Benivieni.[1] These infantine voices mingling harmoniously with the sound of all the bells, made the people suppose themselves, says the monk Burlamachi, transported to the New Jerusalem, and that the glory of Paradise had descended upon the earth. Tears of emotion flowed from all eyes, and several of the *moderate* faction, who came with the intention of murmuring and cursing, were so much touched by the universal enthusiasm that

[1] One of these spiritual songs was a kind of patriotic chant, and began with these words:—

Viva nei nostri cuori, viva Fiorenza.

they added their tribute of blessings and tears. On this first day was celebrated the triumph of innocence and charity.[1]

The following year Savonarola, emboldened by success, organised a still more solemn procession, which was to represent the principal object of his long apostolical labours; that is to say, the triumph of Christianity over Paganism. On this occasion it was also the children who were to perform the most interesting part. First they went from house to house, demanding, in the name of Jesus Christ and of the holy Virgin, that the *anathema* should be given up to them; meaning by this expression all objects of art and luxury which the preacher had denounced as profane. The produce of all these voluntary offerings were placed on a pile erected in the Piazza, and exposed to the eyes of the citizens as spoils rescued from the infernal powers. There might be seen collections of licentious songs, with the instruments which had been used to accompany them; heaps of indecent engravings; portraits in which modesty was not respected in the costume; the tales of Boccaccio, and other compositions of the same kind; the *Morgante* of Pulci; and all the burlesque epics in which adventurous libertines were substituted for the heroes of the old romances of chivalry; the amatory poems of classical antiquity, and those which had been composed in imitation of them, or otherwise, both in Latin and Italian; and lastly, a multitude of works in painting and sculpture of the greatest

[1] The alms collected during this procession, both in jewels and money, were so abundant that they were sufficient to found four Monti di Pietà —one in each quarter of the city, which raised the fury of the usurers and bankers to its height.

value, which were brought by their authors and possessors to be offered up as a holocaust on this altar of purification. Although it seemed hardly possible to have exceeded the imposing pomp of the first procession, this, nevertheless, produced still greater effect upon the people; first, because it took place on the first day of the Carnival, and therefore publicly testified the magical power of Savonarola over the most inveterate habits; and second, because the arrangement of the fête itself had been more skilfully conceived than on the first occasion. All the Christian arts had been put in requisition to increase its magnificence, and among other masterpieces was an infant Christ, sculptured by Donatello, placed on a pedestal of gold, from the height of which he gave the benediction with one hand, and with the other displayed a cross, nails, and a crown of thorns. After having traversed the whole city, collecting alms and singing alternately psalms, hymns, and lauds, the children chanted a pious invective, composed expressly against the Carnival, which was represented by a monstrous figure, emblematic of the most degrading vices, seated on the top of the pile, which soon became a prey to the flames amidst the acclamations of the people, whose voices drowned the sound of the bells of the palace and the loud flourish of trumpets.

We should be tempted to believe that this increasing enthusiasm must at length have reached its height, and that minds kept for so long a time on the full stretch would insensibly become relaxed. Precisely the reverse happened; for the Carnival of the following year was celebrated by the destruction of a still greater number of profane or licentious works: amongst them were several

antique statues, the full rounded contours of which admirably expressed that charm of pagan voluptuousness so well understood by the sensual artists of Greece and Rome.[1]

Fra Bartolomeo gave up, without reserve, all the drawings which he had made as studies of the nude, and his example was followed by Lorenzo di Credi and by several other painters, who had comprehended the necessity of an immediate reform in art. This time the offerings were even more abundant; the images of saints and the banners displayed in the procession gave a still higher idea of the capabilities of Christian sculpture and painting; the pile was constructed on a grander scale, and surmounted with more significant emblems; and instead of shouting cries of joy when the fire was lighted, the people chanted majestically the *Te Deum*.[2]

These imposing ceremonies, combined with the almost daily preaching of Savonarola, produced an impression so much the more profound on all classes of citizens, because each was the result of a long-considered and skilfully-concerted plan. It was not a transitory enthusiasm, such as might have been excited by an ignorant fanatic; it was an enthusiasm which had taken root in the deepest recesses of the heart. It was the bursting forth, as it were, of all those sentiments which had been stirred up and kept in fermentation during eight years by this philosophical missionary. He had so regulated his eloquence as never to appear retrograde, nor even stationary, in the long career before him, which will

[1] The names of the most celebrated contemporaneous beauties had been given to these statues,—*La bella Bencina, la Lena Morella, la bella Bina, &c.*

[2] Burlamachi, p. 128–136.

account for his having been accused of excessive simplicity at the outset of his course;[1] but as his vast plan of reform unfolded itself, a reform which was to embrace every faculty of the human mind vitiated by inveterate habits of paganism, those minds capable of sustaining the light of truth awoke insensibly to more Christian convictions; and it was only after having laboured to strengthen them by every means that theological, philosophical, and historical science placed at his disposal, that Savonarola, already the absolute master of the intellect and the heart, felt it was time to strike the imagination by the display of ceremonies, partly religious and partly dramatic, which were repeated with continually increasing pomp during three consecutive years.

These triumphal processions do not appear to have been in any way disturbed by the Moderate faction, who had become insignificant as compared with the immense majority who favoured Savonarola; but this very concentration of their rage served to increase its venom and ingenuity, and such was their indefatigable zeal in stirring up enemies to Savonarola among the more corrupt portion of the citizens, that nothing was wanting to ensure the success of their projects of vengeance when the fatal day arrived.

It was not the old who were the most zealous instigators of this growing hatred, irritated as they were at finding the victims of their licentiousness daily decrease;[2]

[1] He notices this himself in his Sermon for the First Sunday after Easter.

[2] See the Sermon for the Wednesday in Holy Week. Elsewhere he reproaches them with resembling the elders who watched the chaste Susanna.—Sermon for the First Sunday in Advent.

neither was it the professors of profane literature, whose occupation had almost sunk to a level with the mechanical arts; neither was it the corrupt portion of the priests and monks, although attacked and anathematised with all the force that eloquence could give to a courageous and irreproachable preacher: the mortal enemies of Savonarola were the bankers and commercial men of all classes in Florence.

He had in their eyes committed the unpardonable offence of having used all his efforts to encourage the investment of capital in the Monte di Pietà, founded for the purpose of saving the poorer citizens from the ruinous exactions of the usurers. A momentary perturbation in financial speculations had been the result, and serious alarm was entertained as to the effect which might be produced on this branch of commerce for the future. Further, the reform which had extended successively to a great number of articles of luxury threatened with impoverishment, and even utter ruin, all those merchants who depended upon the vices of a corrupt age for their maintenance. These merchants and bankers organised a formidable confederacy, the ramifications of which extended as far as Rome, where the crimes of the infamous family of the Borgia caused even more horror from their impunity than from their enormity. To these bold violations of all laws, human and divine, the sermons of Savonarola could only appear the seditious declamations of a sectarian; the bankers, usurers, and merchants, who multiplied accusations and calumnies against him, were also secretly encouraged in all the machinations they plotted for his destruction; and

after eight years of the vilest intrigues, their measures, prepared so long beforehand with such infernal art, brought about the fatal tragedy so well known to all the world.

Besides this vile interest of exchange, usury, and negociation, there was another which Savonarola had compromised and wounded,—it was the interest of ambition and self-love, over which this respectable class of citizens watched with as much solicitude as over the other. For had not the insolent preacher boldly declared to the fathers of families that an education for their children, which consisted in the study of profane poetry, followed up by sending them afterwards into a banking-house to be instructed in exchange and usury, was as prejudicial to their souls as to their intellects?[1] and had he not filled up the measure of his presumption by extolling a political constitution, which deprived the great capitalists of the enormous influence they had hitherto exercised over public affairs?

This reveals the secret of Savonarola's predilection for popular government, and his invincible repugnance for the administration of the Medici. As an intellectual being, and still more as a man devoted to the service of God, he had conceived a horror for the government of the bankers; and the idea of placing magisterial sovereignty in hands which might have been polluted with illicit gains was to him the subversion of all social principles. It was on this account he so often exhorted the

[1] *La prima cosa li padri gli ponghono ad imparar poesie, e dipoi alli banchi ad imparare cambj. ed usure e così gli mandano a caso del diavolo.*—"Sermon for the Second Monday in Lent."

Florentines to uphold their democratic constitution,[1] never ceasing to repeat to them, that it was the only one suited to their wants, and that God in his mercy had granted it to them as a remedy for their civil disorders, which does not by any means imply that this was the most desirable form of government; for Savonarola was never the apologist of republican institutions in the sense which has been attached to them by modern writers, although some among them have been too eager to inscribe this great name on the list of their boasted predecessors. In his opinion monarchy was the best form of government, and this he boldly declared to his auditors, who were all citizens of a republic.[2] In his favourite Utopia, which was to be the realisation of his most cherished hopes, all the honours were to be bestowed on royalty; and in applying the passage of Zechariah, where

[1] He wished a patriotic song to be composed, with which all the citizens were to be acquainted . . . . *Dovete fare una canzone che ognuno la sappia.* But he did not ask for a song of revolutionary orgies. Far from inviting the people to interfere in the government, he used all his influence to prevent their doing so. *Lassati governare da chi governa e non voler ingerirti alle dignità, ma lascia fare a Dio, etc.*—" Sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent." In that for the Third Tuesday in Lent are these striking words: *Cittadini miei, quando voi andate sù nei vostri consigli, se voi foste umili, iddio vi illuminaria; se voi non foste ambitiosi e tanto superbi, voi avveste fatto ora mille cose che non avete fatto.* . . . . Certainly this spirit of humility is not that of modern republicanism. It is, however, easy to perceive, from the whole of Savonarola's political ideas, that he would have thought the worst of republics less objectionable than certain monarchies.

[2] *Dove è un buon capo è buon governo, e questo è l'ottimo dei governi* . . . . Next to a monarchy, he considered an aristocratic government, as that of Venice, the best form.—Sermon for the Second Sunday in Advent. In the Sermon for the Third Sunday he again mentions his preference for a monarchical form of government.

the prophet inquires of the angel of the Lord what was meant by the two olive-trees which were on the right and left of the candlestick,[1] Savonarola explained, that the one represented the popes and the prelates who should direct Christendom in the days of its regeneration, and the other the temporal princes who would then labour for the defence of the Church and the propagation of Christianity;[2] and if his language was different when he particularly addressed the Florentines, it was only from not finding the necessary elements to constitute a monarchy on its true basis, and because he thought that the solē power placed in the hands of a Medici, or any other banker who might be equally influential from his wealth, would be only employed, as before, in the encouragement of profane or pagan ideas, which had exercised such baneful influence over the minds of the people during the century now drawing to a close.

The recital of the catastrophe which terminated the life of this great man does not belong to my subject; but the authority I have ascribed to him as the reformer of art and Christian poetry does not permit me to pass over in silence the efforts which were made after his death to rehabilitate his memory, which his persecutors had in vain attempted to blast. The grief of the more illustrious Florentine artists was of itself a glorious justification; but there were also others who did not content themselves with silent homage, and who, before the ashes of their hero were cold, published apologetic discourses in the very face of his enemies. Paintings not less significative

[1] Zechariah, ch. iv.

[2] Sermon for the Fifth Saturday.

made their appearance, as well as medals, in which the most glorious titles were bestowed upon him.[1]

At Rome, Raphael was the first who undertook his apotheosis, by placing him among the most illustrious doctors of the Church in the Dispute on the holy Sacrament. Ten years had then elapsed since the death of Savonarola; Pope Julius II., who was worthy of appreciating such a genius, had succeeded Alexander Borgia on the pontifical throne, and thus were terminated the scandals with which this infamous family had appalled Italy. The severe and despotic character of this pontiff will not allow us to suppose that Raphael would have ventured to place the portrait of Savonarola in one of the Stanze of the Vatican, unless the idea had been suggested to him by Julius himself, who, no doubt, preferred this kind of reparation, as affording the best guarantee for present publicity and future perpetuity.

In the course of the sixteenth century, not only was his innocence fully established, but even his sanctity was believed in; and this opinion gained such credit among Christians, that the Church of Rome felt it necessary to examine into the grounds of the sentence of Savonarola, and the part which Alexander VI. had taken in his condemnation. This examination took place on the occasion of the beatification of Caterina di Ricci, who was accused of having frequently implored his intercession as a saint; and during the whole time of the inquiry, S. Filippo Neri, who kept a portrait of Savonarola en-

[1] *Si vedano uscire dei pubblici scritti, delle significanti pitture, delle medaglia che lo van decoranda dei titoli più gloriosi.*—Bartoli, *Apologia di Savonarola*, p. 177.

circled by a glory in his room, implored God, with a fervency amounting to anguish, that this immortal champion of the Christian faith might not be subjected to a second condemnation. It is further stated, that having learnt by a special revelation that the memory of his hero would come out pure and without spot from this last trial, he felt it impossible to contain his transports of joy, which were warmly shared by a great number of the faithful, in whose eyes this result was equivalent to a formal canonization; and the court of Rome was so indulgent to public opinion on this occasion, that she allowed to be exposed for sale, and freely circulated in pious families, medals and portraits in bronze, with inscriptions, in which the blessed Fra Girolamo Savonarola was entitled Doctor and Martyr.[1]

At Florence his name has never ceased to be popular, and if the torrent of paganism burst the barrier he raised against it during ten years, and inundated afresh all the branches of the national literature, this was not the case with art, the more spiritual doctrines of which, having been completely re-established by him, were preserved and prolonged to a late period in the sixteenth century by a small number of Christian artists, with whom enthusiasm for their art remained henceforth inseparably united to veneration for the memory of him whom they had always regarded as their spiritual guide and master.

[1] Bartoli, p. 183, and following pages.

CHAPTER IX.

Purely Religious School formed under the influence of Savonarola—Baldini, Lorenzo di Credi, Fra Bartolomeo, Ridolfo Ghirlandajo and his pupil, Michele di Ridolfo—Naturalism of Pier di Cosimo and Mariotto Albertinelli—Mixed Character of the Works of Andrea del Sarto—Early Promise of Pontormo—Singular Phases in his Career—Decline of Art accelerated by Pontormo, and still more by his scholar, A. Allri—Effect produced by the Statues in the Gardens of the Medici, and by Michael Angelo, Il Rosso, Granacci, Bugiardini, Vasari, and Salviati, the worst of all—Enlargement of the domain of Paganism.

We have seen that three artists were placed more immediately under the influence of Savonarola, viz. Lorenzo di Credi, Fra Bartolomeo, and the engraver Baldini; and we have remarked with regard to the latter that his burin was never sullied by any licentious or profane work, a merit much more rare in the history of engraving than in that of the other arts of design. Little is known of his history or personal character, but a considerable number of his works have been preserved. A set of twenty-four figures of prophets by him are admirable, both for pose, expression, and character, especially the Aaron and David, which may be regarded as true biblical inspirations. The eight lines in Italian placed beneath each subject were probably suggested by Savonarola, or rather by that taste for the ancient prophecies which his sermons had excited.[1]

[1] Bartsch, vol. i.

The engravings he executed for the famous edition of Dante of 1481, so few of which, unfortunately, now remain to us, are another proof of the serious direction his imagination had taken; a direction which is explained not only by the earnest efforts of Savonarola at this time to purify and elevate the fine arts, but also by the enthusiasm that Botticelli, the friend of Baldini, had conceived for the Divine Comedy, in writing commentaries upon which he consumed the latter years of his life. In one of the three engravings executed by Baldini for a mystical work entitled *Il Monte Sancto di Dio*,[1] we find certain reminiscences of the poem of Dante, amongst others, Lucifer crushing a sinner in each of his three jaws.

We fortunately possess more details of Lorenzo di Credi, one of the most interesting characters in the history of art. Very few artists have been placed in such favourable circumstances, or have been so happily guided in the choice of objects worthy of their emulation and enthusiasm. Perugino and Leonardo da Vinci were the companions and friends of his youth, and he had hardly time to feel the void which their departure must have occasioned when it was filled by Savonarola and the poet Benivieni, not to speak of his filial tenderness for Andrea Verocchio, whose remains he transported to Florence, making a journey to Venice for the express purpose of fulfilling this last duty towards his benefactor and master.

Lorenzo di Credi was placed successively under the influence of Andrea Verocchio, Leonardo da Vinci, Peru-

[1] Bartsch, vol. i,

gino, and Savonarola; and this fourfold influence, combined with the exquisite tenderness of his soul and the angelic purity of his imagination, has given a peculiar character to all the productions of his pencil, which enables us to recognise them at the first glance.

Although the fame of Andrea Verocchio is principally founded on his merits as a sculptor, his doctrines were exclusively inherited by those among his pupils who turned their attention to painting. Several of his designs, preserved in the collection of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, offer such a striking resemblance to certain works of Leonardo da Vinci, that we might easily mistake them for his productions;[1] and if our memory is sufficiently accurate to enable us to compare the St. John at the Louvre with the bronze David in the Florence gallery, we shall discover that we are indebted to Verocchio for the original type of those animated heads in which life beams in a graceful smile. They were appropriated by the genius of Leonardo and transplanted into the Milanese school, where we shall afterwards trace their magnificent development.

Lorenzo di Credi adopted the same types, with this difference, that whenever he followed his own inspirations he substituted a soft and melancholy expression, more congenial to the natural bent of his mind for the smiling airs of his master. His first works were two Madonnas, one from a design of Verocchio, the other from a picture

[1] Vasari possessed some designs by him, among others certain female heads, distinguished for that smiling beauty and peculiar mode of dressing the hair, *quali per la sua bellezza Lionardo da Vinci sempre imitò*.—*Vita d'Andrea Verocchio.*

by Leonardo da Vinci, which he imitated with such skill that it was impossible to distinguish the copy from the original.[1] This imitation seems to have been the prevailing passion of his youth; he pursued it as the supreme aim of his art, not only in his easel pictures, but also in innumerable drawings in crayons, pen, and acquerella.[2] It only depended on himself to have borrowed even more frequently from Andrea Verocchio, who at his death bequeathed to Lorenzo his whole collection of designs, bas reliefs, and statues; but it is probable that he profited but little from these advantages, for, having once fixed his mind and devoted his pencil to two or three subjects peculiarly congenial to the devotional turn of his mind, he confined himself to a narrow circle of mystical representations, and strove to make up for want of variety by the exquisite finish of the details, the freshness of the landscape, and the delicacy of the outline.

His favourite composition was the Virgin in adoration before the infant Christ; and it was doubtless Perugino who inspired him with a predilection for this subject, so peculiarly his own.[3] It was not, however, that in which he succeeded the best. The palm must rather be assigned to two pictures, one in the Louvre, the other in the cathedral of Pistoja. They both represent the Madonna seated, with the infant Christ on her knees, and a saint on either side of the throne. In the picture of

[1] These two pictures were sent to the King of Spain.—Vasari, *Vita di Lor. Credi.*

[2] Vasari, *ibid.*

[3] I have seen eight or ten pictures by Lorenzo di Credi, in which the Virgin is represented kneeling before the infant Christ. Out of this number Florence at least possesses four, and Berlin three.

Pistoja the head of the Virgin and that of St. John have so divine a character of beauty, all the accessories are so well given, the landscape background is so charming, the colours so skilfully managed in the vases of flowers placed on the cornice, and the carnations are so pure, that this marvellous work, superior to any which its author had executed at Florence, was long believed to be by the hand of Leonardo da Vinci.[1] The picture in the Louvre does not excite my admiration to the same degree, notwithstanding the beauty of the St. Nicholas, whose head is a perfect model of form, expression, and delicacy of pencilling; but the figure of the infant Christ is carelessly painted, and the type of the Virgin less happily conceived than in the Pistoja picture. Vasari, however, prefers this work, painted originally for a chapel at Castello, to all the others, as that in which the artist has put forth all his powers, and made the greatest efforts to surpass himself.[2]

Although Fra Bartolomeo was placed under the same influences as Lorenzo di Credi, these two artists only resemble one another in their common repugnance for

[1] Salvi, t. ii. c. 422. In the church of Sta. Maria della Grazie there is another Madonna by Lorenzo; *one of the best pictures that Pistoja possesses*, says Vasari. At the foot of the throne are six figures of saints, the attitude of the two kneeling female saints is very fine. Unhappily, the colour has suffered, but it is still superior to any picture by him at Florence.

[2] *La migliore opera che Lorenzo facesse mai . . . . . Quella in cui pose maggiore studio e diligenza per vincere se stesso . . . . . Questa tavola lavorata con tanta pulitezza che non si può più . . . . .* It is easy to prove the identity of this picture with that in the Louvre; as Vasari says that the Virgin is on the throne between St. Julian and St. Nicholas.

all profane subjects, and in the fidelity with which they devoted their pencil to representations exclusively Christian; in every other respect they present a perfect contrast.

The imagination of Fra Bartolomeo glowed with religious and poetical exaltation, with the love of God, and enthusiasm for art. He was scarcely twenty when he edified the Florentines by his piety[1] and the assiduity with which he attended the sermons of Savonarola. The eight years which he passed in that burning atmosphere of zeal which the great orator had formed around him, were precisely those at which the strongest and most durable impressions are made, impressions which could never be effaced from his mind; and it is to this we must attribute his unwavering fidelity through life to his first vocation.

He was first placed under Cosimo Rosselli, but Vasari tells us that as soon as he was capable of choosing for himself he began to study the works of Leonardo da Vinci with the greatest delight; and his progress in design and colouring was so rapid, that he soon eclipsed the greater number of his contemporaries. Even at this early period, Fra Bartolomeo seems to have perceived that the Florentine school, so celebrated for its knowledge of design, had not devoted the same attention to that musical element of painting chiaroscuro. He imposed upon himself the task of supplying this defect, selecting as the companion of his labours Mariotto Albertinelli, endowed no less richly than himself with the sentiment of harmony in colour. But the two friends had not exe-

[1] *Era amato in Firenze per la virtù sua . . . . . Era timorato di Dio, &c.*—Vasari, *Vita di Fra Bartolomeo.*

cuted many works in common,[1] when party-spirit tore asunder the bonds that united them, and threw the unstable Mariotto into the faction of the Moderates.

At this time the career of Fra Bartolomeo was momentarily arrested; and he was so completely absorbed by his enthusiasm for Savonarola, that he was unable to finish his fresco of the Last Judgment in the hospital of Sta. Maria Nuova. Only one work was produced by his pencil during this long period of feverish excitement. This work, sparkling and imaginative as a strophe of dithyrambic poetry, was the portrait of the monk by whose eloquence he was so powerfully affected. He represented him in the costume and attitude of a preacher thundering from the pulpit, his hand prophetically raised to heaven, and with a menacing and inspired air, in which, however, nothing of the pythoness, nothing undignified, appears. It was a tribute of the most profound admiration, in which the artist displayed his utmost powers; and those among his contemporaries who were worthy to appreciate this fine work, must have felt that it atoned for several years of inactivity.[2]

We have already mentioned the catastrophe which decided Fra Bartolomeo to bid an eternal farewell to art and to the world, and to assume the habit of a monk in the convent of Prato. Happily, he soon passed into that of

[1] These were Madonnas for private oratories. I do not think there is any authentic specimen in the Florence galleries. The Berlin gallery possesses an Assumption, the upper part of which is painted by Fra Bartolomeo, and the lower, in which are several kneeling saints, by Mariotto Albertinelli.

[2] His fine portrait of St. Vincent, now in the Academia delle belle Arti, may enable us to form some idea of that of Savonarola.

S. Marco at Florence, where the prayers of the monks and the entreaties of his numerous admirers at length overcame his scruples; and after having spent four years in the exclusive exercise of religious contemplation, he once more consented to take up his pencil in order to paint in a chapel of the Badia, St. Bernard in ecstasy before the holy Virgin—a subject quite in harmony with the recent habits of the artist, and peculiarly adapted to reconcile him to his art.[1] Immediately after he painted a Madonna for Agnolo Doni, and several other pictures for Cardinal Giovanni di Medici, afterwards Leo X.

At this time the young Raphael came to Florence, and the intimacy which immediately sprang up between these two great painters was a new era in the life of Fra Bartolomeo. We have already spoken of the original drawings in the collection of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and of the Madonna in the gallery of Cardinal Fesch at Rome, as proofs of the happy influence which Raphael exercised over his friend, without its having in the least impaired his originality.[2] Grace had hitherto been wanting in the works of Fra Bartolomeo; he had not yet felt the charm of those softly undulating lines which the Umbrian artists introduced with such effect into their works, and the impetuosity of his imagination communicating itself to his pencil, gave a harsh and angular character to his style. His types of the Virgin were also unsatisfactory, having little of the divine except in the attitude, and being somewhat deficient in serious-

[1] This painting is also in the Academia delle belle Arti.

[2] Chap. vii. p. 278.

ness of expression. Severity in the choice of subjects, and relief of the form by means of chiaroscuro, were what constituted the special merit of Fra Bartolomeo; and it must be allowed that in both these respects he has far surpassed the generality of Florentine artists.

Before he could be perfect, or even approach perfection, it was necessary that he should learn to give more suavity to his contours, and more of that celestial expression to the heads of his Virgins which makes the angelic salutation instinctively rise to our lips. This important service was rendered him by Raphael, and during the nine remaining years of his life, after the departure of the latter for Rome, the impress left by this transcendent genius was never effaced from his imagination, nor the recollection of his friendship from his heart.

But if his progress was important, it was proportionably slow; for, in the pictures which he executed immediately after the arrival of Raphael, the influence of the latter is scarcely perceptible. To convince ourselves of this we have only to examine the two large compositions executed by him, nearly at the same time, for the convent of S. Marco, one of which, since transported to the Pitti palace, commands the attention of the most superficial observer, even more by its grandiose character than from the unusual size of its dimensions.[1] We cannot be astonished that even the graceful imagination of Raphael was subjugated by it, or that he should have borrowed

[1] A bad copy by a certain Petrucci has replaced the original in the church of S. Marco. The other picture still remains on the opposite altar, but the shadows have become so black that it is hardly possible to make it out. That which has passed into the collection of the Grand Duke is not entirely exempt from this defect.

something from it in his famous picture of the Madonna del Baldacchino. The great fresco in the corridor of the convent of S. Agostino, at Siena,[1] probably belongs to the same period, as well as several Madonnas and Holy Families now dispersed in Italy and throughout Europe, but they have none of the characteristics of Fra Bartolomeo's second manner.

In 1508 he lost Raphael, but the advantages he had derived from his intimate connexion with that great artist still remained to him; indeed, it was after this separation that the new charm, diffused as if by enchantment over his works, shows us how much the style of these two great artists had been influenced by the friendship they entertained for each other. A journey that Fra Bartolomeo made shortly afterwards to Rome, for the purpose of beholding the marvels which Raphael and Michael Angelo were executing in the Vatican, afforded him also an opportunity of paying his tribute to the eternal city, and the subject selected was as appropriate to the artist as to the place for which it was destined; for he was employed to paint the two colossal figures of St. Peter and St. Paul which are still to be seen in the Quirinal,[2] and which have that severe and grandiose

[1] It represents the Crucifixion, with the Maries weeping at the foot of the cross.

[2] The St. Peter was finished by Raphael, in consequence of the sudden departure of Fra Bartolomeo, who could neither reconcile himself to the air of Rome nor to the confusion excited in his mind by the sight of so many monuments of ancient and modern art. *Fra le antiche e le moderne opere che vide e in tanta copia, stordì di maniera, etc.*—Vasari, *Vita di Fra Bartolomeo.* May not these equivocal words hide disgust of another kind?

character so necessary in the treatment of subjects of this kind.

On his return to Florence he had to refute two accusations brought against him by his enemies; the first, that he concealed under the ample folds of his draperies his powerlessness to draw the nude; the second, still more senseless, that he was incapable of designing on a grand scale. This latter accusation was probably founded on the circumstance of his having quitted Rome without completing the work he had undertaken there. He refuted both these calumnies most triumphantly.

It is easy to perceive that a snare was concealed under this apparent defiance, and that it was hoped that, by means of a bait so cunningly offered to his *amour propre*, the Christian artist might be tempted to transgress the narrow circle of religious representations to which he had scrupulously confined himself: but he knew how to vindicate his art without violating the rules he had prescribed to himself when, instead of a Danaë or a Venus, he produced a St. Sebastian, which shut the mouths of the most *exigeant* critics of anatomical science;[1] and with regard to the second accusation, he completely refuted it by the production of his St. Mark, a colossal work denoting the greatest energy of conception, and which might easily be taken, not for a great statue changed into a picture, as the *colto forestiere*, quoted by

[1] This picture, placed at first in the church of the Annunziata, was afterwards withdrawn, in consequence of the representations of the confessors, who received confidential communications, which made its removal necessary. It was afterwards sold, and sent into France.

Lanzi, foolishly said of it, but rather for a Daniel, an Isaiah, or some other prophet of the Old Testament.[1]

In order to form any idea of what the pencil of Fra Bartolomeo was capable of producing in a totally different style, we must attentively examine the original drawings of this artist, and become acquainted not only with the Madonna of Cardinal Fesch, but also with that which forms the principal ornament of the cathedral of Lucca. This is, of all his works, the most worthy to be compared with the chefs-d'œuvre of Raphael, both for the grandeur of the forms and for grace and purity of outline, not to speak of the colouring, which might easily sustain a comparison with the finest works of the Lombard school. When Fra Bartolomeo undertook this work, a lingering malady, which he flattered himself change of air would cure, had quenched for a time the fire of his imagination, substituting in its stead a soft and dreamy melancholy, which may easily be recognised in every part of this mystical work, even if the thoughts by which his mind was at that time preoccupied had not been attested by the express though somewhat obscure words of Vasari.[2]

He executed this chef-d'œuvre in 1509, the year after Raphael's departure for Rome; and this date, joined to

[1] This large picture is now removed to the Pitti palace. Two other figures in the same style, although of smaller dimensions, are in the Tribune at Florence, and are worthy to be placed beside all the chefs-d'œuvre this famous room contains: they represent two prophets, on whom the impress of the patriarchal character is well marked.

[2] *Mentre che egli stette (nel monasterio) . . . . Accompagno ultimamente per l'anima e per la casa l'operazione delle mani alla contemplazione della morte*, &c.

the peculiar circumstances in which he then found himself placed, reveals to us the influence which enabled him to rise so superior to himself.

There is another picture of the same date in the church of S. Romano at Lucca. In the upper part appears the first Person of the Trinity, surrounded by a group of angels, and below St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Catherine of Alexandria, in ecstasy at the foot of the cross. In this picture the resemblance to the style of Raphael is so striking, that he has been supposed to have assisted directly in its execution, Fra Bartolomeo having only lent the magic of his colouring to the graceful and animated contours traced by the more skilful hand of his friend.[1]

A pen-and-ink drawing of this beautiful composition is in the collection of the Grand Duke at Florence, and it is impossible to imagine anything more graceful or charming than the angels in the upper part, or, indeed, anything more opposed to the angular style which characterises certain of the works of Fra Bartolomeo: this drawing was, in fact, placed at first among those of Leonardo da Vinci, and it was only on comparing it with the picture in S. Romano that it was afterwards assigned to its true author.

If we consider the choice of this thoroughly mystical subject, and the happy inspirations under which it was executed, with reference to certain passages in Vasari, who represents this pious and enthusiastic artist preparing himself for death by employing his pencil on votive offerings, and afterwards returning to Florence with a

[1] Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, 3ter th. § 1, p. 71, 72.

new passion, that of music, which threw a charm over the remainder of his life,[1]—when, I say, we compare these interesting facts with one another, we seem to discover in the depths of his soul the flux and reflux of that inward poetry which had agitated him so violently in the time of Savonarola, and which, having now become more calm, without being less abundant, reflected the ineffable visions of his celestial imagination.

Without attempting to enumerate all his known works, or arranging them in the order in which they were composed, we shall content ourselves with describing two or three of his latest productions, in addition to those of which we have already spoken. The picture of the angelic Salutation, now in the Louvre, and which bears the date 1515,[2] is a most brilliant and original composition; here the Virgin, instead of being represented kneeling in some retired spot, is seated on a throne receiving the homage of various saints, when the angel Gabriel appears before her. But the artist never seems to have been so happily inspired as in a picture of much larger dimensions, executed in the same year, for the church of S. Romano at Lucca, and which may sustain a favourable comparison with all the most magnificent works of his grand style: this picture is the *Madonna della Misericordia*, or the Virgin taking under her protection the people of Lucca, represented by a multitude of old men, women, and children kneeling before her, and over whom she appears to extend her

[1] *Ritornando in Firenze, diede opera alle cose di musica, e di quelle molto dilettandosi*, &c.

[2] Another picture of larger dimensions, also in the Louvre, is inscribed with the date of 1511.

mantle, sustained by angels. For knowledge of design, boldness of relief, and harmony of colour, we might seek in vain for a work more nearly approaching perfection; while the selection of the figures and the general character of the outline is so completely his own, that we cannot for a moment suppose that Raphael had any hand in it; although this has been asserted with some plausibility of the very different picture with which Fra Bartolomeo, six years before, when his style was more soft and graceful, decorated the adjoining chapel.

A short time before his death, which happened in 1517, Fra Bartolomeo had been commissioned to paint a large picture for the Sala del Consiglio in the Palazzo Vecchio, in which all the patron saints of the city of Florence were to be represented; but, from a fatality to which Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci were likewise the victims, he had only time to execute the design (now in the Uffizi) in chiaroscuro. This drawing, independently of its excellence as a work of art, interests us as the last conception of one of the greatest painters of the Florentine school; a *resumé*, perhaps, of his religious and patriotic affections, and the first imperfect expression of a prayer for his country, the completion of which he left to others.

Among the painters who never forgot the profound impression made upon them by Savonarola, we must mention Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, who from his childhood was surrounded by the most happy influences. There is every reason to believe that he figured among the eight thousand children, on whom Savonarola founded his hopes of a better future for the republic. His father,

Dominico, who died about that time, had always professed peculiar veneration for the Order founded by his patron saint; he had painted his finest work in a church of the Dominicans,[1] and there the family of the Ghirlandaii[2] were interred. In addition, the companions and masters selected for Ridolfo, or whom he chose for himself, were all more or less imbued with the elevated doctrines which Savonarola had so zealously inculcated on the artists; and even if Vasari had not mentioned the close relations which he cultivated in early youth with Fra Bartolomeo and Raphael, the sight of one of his pictures would sufficiently show that he was little influenced by the paternal traditions, but had learnt to draw his inspirations from another source.

He was directed in his first studies by his two uncles, Davide and Benedetto, both very second-rate and deservedly-forgotten painters, who did little credit to Dominico their brother and master.[3] The first died in 1525, just as he was starting for Rome, whither he was going, at the advanced age of seventy-four, to assist at the jubilee: he therefore enjoyed for many years the increasing celebrity of his nephew, in whom he thanked God that the glory of the family was once more revived. The second worked much in France; and if all the works he executed there resemble that now preserved in the Louvre,[4] we may reasonably be surprised that he

[1] Santa Maria Novella.

[2] Vasari, *Vita di Ridolfo Ghirlandajo.*

[3] *Si sviarono dal bene operare.*—Ibid.

[4] This picture represents Christ bearing his cross. The types are so vulgar, that they might easily be attributed to some second-rate artist of the German school.

should have received such distinguished marks of royal munificence.

Happily their influence over Ridolfo was of short duration, being quickly effaced by that of Fra Bartolomeo in the first place, and shortly afterwards by that of Raphael. In the year which preceded the arrival of the latter at Florence, Ridolfo, who was only then nineteen, executed the magnificent picture now in the Louvre, and which becomes still more precious from the date it bears. In comparing it with that of the Visitation placed near it, and which is a remarkable work of Dominico Ghirlandajo's, we immediately perceive that there was no longer anything in common between the genius of the father and son, and that Ridolfo did not consider the obligation to walk scrupulously in the paternal steps as one of the duties of filial piety. In this picture the Virgin, who receives with humility the immortal crown from the hands of her Son, in the presence of the celestial hierarchy, is no longer a pretty Florentine maiden, the favourite type of the partisans of naturalism, but a figure completely *peruginesque,* both in the type and in the proportions; some of the angels appear likewise to be imitated from the Umbrian school; and among the personages who occupy the lower part of the picture there is a St. Francis in ecstasy, who recalls the happiest inspirations of Pinturicchio and Perugino. Several of his other compositions, as they are described by Vasari, appear to have been literally borrowed from these two great masters: of this number was a picture of the Nativity, painted for a convent at Cestello, on

which the artist bestowed the greatest pains,[1] and in which he represented that favourite subject of the Umbrian school, the Virgin in adoration before the infant Jesus in the manger, and from some feeling of peculiar devotion he introduced into it a St. Francis kneeling, and a landscape background of the greatest beauty, in which we recognise the picturesque rocks of Ausonia, where the saint received the stigmata.[2] Whether he had himself visited these sacred places and the sanctuary of Assisi as a devout pilgrim, or whether he received through others those mystical inspirations of which this holy mountain had become the centre, certain it is that he ever adopted them in preference to others of a very different character, which the schools of Florence and his own family offered him.

These favourable dispositions, cultivated and confirmed by such masters as Fra Bartolomeo and Raphael, naturally produced excellent results. Unfortunately, the paintings he executed for various churches in Florence have almost all disappeared; the beautiful frescos with which he decorated the monastery of the Angeli, out of friendship for his brother Barthelmy, who there took the religious habit, have long since been destroyed;[3] and we are reduced to form our estimate of his graceful and eminently Christian imagination from a small number

[1] *Affaticandosi assai per superare gli emuli suoi, condusse quell' opera con quella maggior fatica e diligenza che gli fu possible, etc.*—Vasari.

[2] Vasari, *ibid.*

[3] These frescos represented passages in the life of St. Benedict, commencing from the point at which Paolo Uccello (who painted a portion of the same subject in chiaroscuro in this cloister) had left off.

of chefs-d'œuvre dispersed through Florence, Prato, Pistoja, France, and Germany.[1] That which is in the church of S. Pietro at Pistoja is the most admirable of all, and is incontestably the finest work of art that this city possesses. There is nothing new either in the composition of the subject or in the arrangement of the figures, since it only consists of a Madonna with the infant Jesus, and two saints on either side of the throne; but what poetry discovers itself in this very simplicity! How easily we recognise the disciple of Raphael in the relief of those elegant forms, in the soft and harmonious colouring, in the animated and graceful contours, in the airs of the heads, even more impossible to describe than all the rest of the picture! If we contemplate this picture in one of those rare moments when the soul is absolutely thirsting for something to admire, its perfection is such that it may easily carry us from enthusiasm to ecstasy, and produce an ineffaceable impression on our minds.

The gallery of the Uffizi at Florence possesses a work by this artist of nearly equal excellence; it is the representation of two miracles performed by St. Zenobius, the patron of Florence: the first during his life, when he resuscitated the son of a poor woman who had laid the body in his path; the other after his death, on the

[1] I allude to the picture of the Assumption in the Berlin Museum. The Virgin is borne upon a cloud and surrounded by a choir of angels. Below are seen the Apostles, who, in conformity to the legend, find only flowers in the tomb. This work is evidently posterior to that in the Louvre, to which it bears a great resemblance in arrangement and composition.

occasion of the translation of his relics to the cathedral, when an elm, which grew opposite to one of the doors of the baptistery, on the spot where we now behold a column, having been touched by the coffin as it was borne in procession, became suddenly adorned with the robe of spring, and miraculously covered with leaves and flowers.[1]

These two popular traditions have been separately treated by Ridolfo Ghirlandajo;[2] and if he has succeeded better in the first than in the last, this is not so much to be ascribed to the inequality of the inspirations as to the different nature of the subjects: the first representing the culminating point in the legend, when the prayer of the unhappy mother is granted in the presence of a crowd of interested spectators, offering the most picturesque contrasts; while the connexion existing between a coffin which passes and a tree which renews its foliage could only be explained by a verbal or written narration, and therefore belonged rather to the domain of legendary poetry than to that of art. With regard, however, to execution and general character, this picture leaves us nothing to desire; and I doubt if the Florentine school has ever produced anything so perfect for beauty of colouring. That which serves as its pendant, not only

[1] Brocchi, *Vita dei Santi Fiorentini*, p. 84. The same subject was treated by Ghiberti, in bas relief, on the shrine of the saint which is in one of the chapels of the cathedral.

[2] The two pictures are of equal dimensions; they were ordered of the artist by the fraternity of S. Zenobius, in order to be placed on each side of the Annunciation by Mariotto Albertinelli, now in the Academia delle belle Arti.

unites these various excellencies, but possesses, in addition, expression and poetry, and the scene of the resuscitation of the child is rendered with all the energy which so eminently dramatic a composition required.

The favourite disciple of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo was a certain Michele, whom he loved and treated with such paternal tenderness that he is known in the history of art by the name of Michele di Ridolfo. He had before been the pupil of Lorenzo di Credi, and the doctrines he had learnt in that school added much to the natural sympathy which his new master, or rather his adoptive father, felt for him. They executed a great number of works in common[1] for the churches of Florence; the charming picture which adorns one of the side-chapels in the church of Santo Spirito may give an idea of the works which this association of their pencils produced. This picture is so completely imbued with the influence of the Umbrian models, that it appears like an importation of foreign growth in the midst of the productions of the national school; and we might take it for a sketch by Raphael completed by a Florentine disciple, so much do the selection of the forms, the ideal character of the types, the airs of the heads, and the general spirit of the contour, recall the first manner of this great master.[2]

[1] *Costoro che s'amarono come padre e figliuolo lavorarono infiniti opere insieme e di compagnia.*—Vasari, *Vita di Ridolfo Ghirlandajo.*

[2] The finest work they executed in common was that for the Camaldolesi of Vertigli, near Monte-San-Savino. In the cloister they painted the history of Joseph sold by his brethren, one of the favourite subjects of the Florentine school; and in the church, several pictures and frescos of great beauty. A magnificent figure of S. Romualdo was especially admired. They were assisted in all these works by Battista Franco, a great master in design, and an excellent colourist.—Vasari, *ibid.*

Vasari tells us that after the death of Ridolfo, which took place in 1560, his cherished disciple continued to work with the same ardour, but he does not add, with the same success;[1] and we understand this reserve, when we compare the pictures now in the Academy with that which they painted together in the church of Santo Spirito. In the former the absence of the master's hand is too evident, and the traditions of the Umbrian school seem almost effaced from the mind of the artist. But we must not forget that Michele almost approaches the close of the sixteenth century, and that nearly a hundred years had intervened since the regeneration so courageously attempted by Savonarola. After such a lapse of time, what could the feeble echo of his prophetic voice effect against the simultaneous invasion of naturalism and paganism? It was, indeed, no mean triumph to have maintained for nearly a century, in spite of so many obstacles, the privileges of Christian art in Florence, and to have naturalised there for this long period the mysticism of the mountains of Umbria. For we have, assuredly, no right to complain that the seeds sown by Perugino and Raphael were unproductive; the development given to them by Fra Bartolomeo, Lorenzo di Credi, and Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, is a phenomenon of which there is but one example in the history of art: and if we regard Michele di Ridolfo as the last representative of the mystic school, the religious subjects which he painted

[1] *Tavole e quadri senza fine fatti con buona pratica.* Vasari himself employed Michele di Ridolfo in the works which were executed under his direction in the apartments of the Palazzo Vecchio.

above the two principal gates of the city[1] may be considered as the last traces left by the genius of Christian painting ere she took her flight to more blessed regions.

In retracing our steps to the commencement of the sixteenth century we shall find another series of traditions, which, although possessing in themselves few claims to our interest, will, nevertheless, merit our attention from the admirable manner in which they have been turned to account by certain artists. When once the sphere of idealism has been quitted, the next which presents itself to the imagination is that of naturalism, taking this term in its highest acceptation. Nature is full of living and mysterious harmonies, which reveal themselves to the soul of the artist and the poet, and guide them instinctively in the choice of form and colour; from hence arise infinitely varied combinations, which, while they move in a circle of conceptions far less sublime than those by which the Umbrian school was nourished, occupy nevertheless the first place in art when we arrive at the period of decline. The charm of a harmonious colouring is not so superficial and material a merit as it is commonly supposed; it belongs to certain conditions of individual organisation, the want of which can never be supplied by the most persevering attention to the best models: and without exactly agreeing with Cochin[2] in his high esti-

[1] That on the *Porta di S. Gallo* is the Madonna with the infant Jesus: on one side St. John the Baptist, patron of Florence; on the other St. Cosimo, patron of the Medici. This subject is repeated on the *Porta di Prato*.

[2] See his *Voyage en Italie* for the remarks on the Florentine school.

mate of those artists *who have studied nature merely with a view to the effects of light, and colour, which is,* according to him, *the most essential part of painting,* we owe them a sort of gratitude for having given this subordinate element all the development of which it was susceptible.

It is true that in this respect the Florentine school has never approached the schools of Venice and Lombardy, but here it is necessary to distinguish between the vigour of the local tone and the harmony which results from skilfully managed gradations and from chiaroscuro: this last constitutes what may be called the poetry of colouring, whilst the other is nothing better than materialism, or rather sensualism; and it must be admitted, to the honour of the Florentine artists, that they never suffered themselves to be seduced by the scandalous favour accorded to the cynical productions of Titian and Giulio Romano.

In the first half of the sixteenth century Florence possessed four great naturalistic painters, each differing from the other according to the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, or the accidental influences to which he was subjected. Their names are no less celebrated than those of the painters of whom we have just spoken: I allude to Pietro di Cosimo, Mariotto Albertinelli, Andrea del Sarto, and Pontormo.

The naturalism of Pier di Cosimo was very peculiar, and often manifested itself under the most extravagant forms. His love of nature was such, that he regarded the intervention of man in its operations as a sort of sacrilege; and he carried this feeling so far that he would not allow the vines and trees of his garden to be pruned,

preferring the savage wildness of nature to the symmetry produced by artificial means. On the same principle he disliked observing any punctuality in his meals, as well as all those restraints which social decency imposes; and his great delight was to retire into solitary places, in order, as Vasari tells us, to build castles in the air and give himself up to the unbridled license of his imagination. He loved to watch the broken and irregular masses of clouds with which the sky is often covered, transforming them into battles, landscapes, or fantastic cities. He also sought for inspirations of the same kind in the neighbourhood of the hospitals, before whose stained and disfigured walls he would often stand for hours in contemplation, until the sound of the church bells or the chant of the monks, which he held in equal abhorrence, drove him to the other extremity of Florence.

With such eccentric tastes and aversions, the talent of Pier di Cosimo could not fail to exhibit a certain degree of caprice and inequality, in those subjects at least in which his enthusiasm for nature did not supply his want of poetical feeling. In the direct representation of natural objects, and even in the musical part of art, as in perspective, chiaroscuro, and the force and harmony of colour, he was equal to the first artists of his time; and very early in life he had distinguished himself by a landscape which he painted in the Sistine chapel as the background to a picture by his master, Cosimo Rosselli: but he could never succeed to the same degree in appropriating to himself the religious element, as a close examination of the two fundamental types of Christian painting in his altar pictures, will convince us. In the church of Santo Spirito are two of

these works, which decorate the two first chapels to the right and left on entering the church, and which would seem to have been placed opposite to one another in order to exhibit the prosaic conceptions of Pier di Cosimo. The first represents the Assumption of the Virgin, and certainly nothing can less resemble the glorified form of the mother of God soaring towards the celestial regions than this heavy figure. In the other he was, if possible, still less fortunate in the choice of his subject; it is the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, one of the most difficult problems of Christian art, and requiring that high mystical exaltation in the artist which forms the distinctive character of the Umbrian school.

These two pictures are, however, far from being the most remarkable productions of the pencil of Pier di Cosimo; even the colour is faint and insipid: while the Coronation of the Virgin in the Louvre is painted with a brilliancy and harmony which strike and charm the eye, and almost make us overlook the imperfection of the types, the arbitrary choice of the costume in the principal figure, and the air of *espièglerie* in the cherubs which makes them resemble Cupids.

Mariotto Albertinelli was the intimate friend of Fra Bartolomeo, and therefore could not fail to be peculiarly affected by the influence which that artist exercised over many of his contemporaries. The works of Mariotto have consequently been often confounded with those of Bartolomeo, on account of the perfect resemblance of their style, particularly in the touch and colouring: in this respect Mariotto was certainly equal to his friend, and

some of his pictures would not be unworthily placed beside those of the Venetian school.

But in grandeur of ideas and purity of expression he was very inferior to Fra Bartolomeo, and in the choice of his types he was rarely able to rise above the most vulgar naturalism. As he did not possess sufficient elevation or poetical feeling to comprehend Savonarola, he conceived the most bitter hatred to him, and ranged himself among the adherents of the Medici and of paganism. Having founded his hopes on the patronage of this family, and devoted himself to the study of antique statues, he listened with indignation to the declamations of the austere preacher against all who placed obstacles in the way of the religious and political regeneration of the Florentines.

Besides these two motives for antipathy we may add another, which proceeded from a profoundly vicious temperament. This was happily checked at first by the friendship of Fra Bartolomeo, but probably gained the ascendancy after the death of Savonarola had separated the two friends, for we have no reason to suppose that their intimacy survived this event. In proportion as each advanced in his respective career their separation became more and more complete. While the one devoted his pencil exclusively to religious compositions, the other, who had never felt enthusiasm for the true and the beautiful, allowed himself to be governed by the most ignoble caprices and passions, renouncing his art to go and keep a tavern at the Porta San Gallo; then growing tired of his new employment, he brought back to his atelier the gross habits he had recently contracted, and

thus with him painting and debauchery went hand in hand, until he terminated his career at the age of forty-five, in an excess of intemperance committed during his residence at Viterbo.[1]

In many respects Mariotto Albertinelli may be called the Giorgione of the Florentine school: both lived and died much in the same manner; both were governed by the same impetuous temperament, and by the same invincible propensity for naturalism; both failed in the representation of pious and mystical subjects, and excelled in what we may call the musical element of art, namely, in all that constitutes the beauty of colouring.

The three pictures by Mariotto Albertinelli, in the galleries of Florence, appear like extraneous productions placed among the works of the Florentine school, which fade beside those vigorous tints in which the transitions and shades are so managed as to conciliate softness with force, this being considered by the artist as the most important aim of art.

His chef-d'œuvre is an Annunciation in the Academy, the details of which are executed with extraordinary care; those, at least, which relate to the effects of light, chiaroscuro, and perspective. In these respects it is impossible to see anything more vigorous, and at the same time more soft and harmonious; and yet it is now seen to comparative disadvantage in its present position, the picture having been more than once retouched by the artist, and the lights and shades distributed with an express view to the locality for which it was intended.

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Mariotto Albertinelli*, passim.

We must not, however, seek in this picture for any of the qualities which distinguish those of the Umbrian school; it is a pure specimen of naturalism. The type of the Virgin is vulgar, while that of the Almighty is positively offensive: the surrounding angels—those, at least, whom he has intended to represent with a smiling expression—are complete caricatures; and with regard to the celestial messenger who pronounces the angelical salutation, there is nothing in his features which announces a being superior to humanity.

Another picture, at least equal to this for the force and vigour of colouring, and certainly superior in the choice of the types, has passed from the church of St. Julian into the same gallery. It represents Christ on the cross, with the two other Persons of the Trinity immediately above, and is painted on a gold ground, from which the principal figure stands out in admirable relief. As a whole it is, perhaps, the most happily inspired of all the artist's works.

His picture of the Visitation in the Uffizi is more generally admired, either because it is better known, or because from its powerful relief it eclipses the most remarkable productions of the Florentine school; a kind of merit which is sure to strike the most careless observer.

Seven or eight drawings by Mariotto, preserved in the Florentine gallery, may be considered as the necessary complement of his works, which are, unfortunately, too rare. There is, in particular, a female head, which for the beauty of the type is very superior to any Madonna he has painted in oil. There is so much

suavity in the contours, and charm in the expression, that we might be tempted to ascribe it to Leonardo da Vinci. Here, also, is the first sketch of the Visitation, and it has been remarked that the physiognomy of St. Elizabeth is much more affectionate than in the picture, and is marked with an indescribable expression of joy. A Holy Family, the contours of which are most delicately executed, far surpasses the design of the Visitation in grace and beauty; and if Mariotto had added the charm of his brilliant and harmonious colouring, this exquisite work would certainly have been his chef-d'œuvre.

Andrea del Sarto might readily be taken for a disciple of Fra Bartolomeo or Mariotto Albertinelli, so great is the resemblance which exists between his pictures and theirs in all that relates to colouring, chiaroscuro, and even in the general style of the design. Without being their immediate disciple, he was instinctively inspired by the works of these two great masters, and this secret affinity was more powerful in its effects than any direct and continued system of instruction could have been. It may also be affirmed that in many respects he drew his inspirations from the same source as themselves; for when he passed from the school of Giovanni Barile into that of Pier di Cosimo, he consecrated all the hours he had at his disposal, and particularly the fête days, to the study of the frescos with which the cloisters and churches were decorated, and afterwards became one of the most ardent and assiduous frequenters of the room in which the famous cartoons of Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo were exposed.

It was there he formed that close friendship with Franciabigio which continued unbroken until the death of the latter, about twenty years later. The one found himself without a master, in consequence of Mariotto Albertinelli having closed his atelier in order to keep a tavern, the other was no longer able to endure the fantastic humours of Pier di Cosimo, so that there was nothing to hinder the execution of a project which the two friends speedily formed of living and working together, and thus opening a path in common to glory and fortune.

A short time after this, the confraternity of St. John the Baptist, called *la Compagnia dello Scalzo*,[1] gave Andrea del Sarto the opportunity of commencing a grand cyclical composition, in which we are the better able to form a judgment of his progress from its having been continued at intervals during fifteen consecutive years.[2] The subject to be represented was the history of St. John the Baptist, in twelve compartments. The artist commences, capriciously enough, by the baptism of Christ; and we may already remark in this first essay the characteristics of his style, in the purity and facility of the drawing, the simplicity of the arrangement, and, above all, a hand singularly successful in tracing on the wall or the canvass the forms of angels or children.

In this picture, as well as in that of the Preaching in the Desert, he has more than once borrowed his types from the works of preceding, and even of Ultramontane artists. In the first, the figure of the Saviour, that of

[1] So called because it was the custom in solemn processions for one of the members to carry the crucifix barefooted.

[2] The first compartment was executed in 1510, and the last in 1525.

St. John, and even the two little angels which are seen kneeling on the right bank of the river, are evidently copies from Dominico Ghirlandajo's great fresco in the choir of Sta. Maria Novella; in the second, not only the works of Ghirlandajo, but also those of Albert Durer, are laid under contribution;[1] and this twofold predilection, which already betrays a very decided taste for naturalism, proves that the lessons of Pier di Cosimo had not been fruitless.

The third compartment, according to chronological order, is that of St. John baptizing in the wilderness. The progress of the artist is here more visible than in the second, and this superiority is explained by his having executed in the interval the oil-picture which is in the church of St. Giacomo at Florence, and the five frescos in the court of the Annunziata, representing the miracles of S. Filippo Benizzi.[2] The first of these subjects, the meeting with the leper near Buonconvento, is still somewhat hard and angular in style, and loose in composition; but it appears a chef-d'œuvre when compared with the adjoining fresco by Cosimo Rosselli, one of the latest and worst of his works. In the next picture, in which the blasphemers are struck by lightning, our admiration does not require to be excited by such a comparison, for it abounds with movement and life; the choice of the attitudes, the distribution of the groups, the taste of the

[1] The figure of a man in a long robe, and a woman seated with a child, are both taken from one of the prints of the little Passion.

[2] S. Filippo Benizzi was born at Florence in 1233. The order of the Servites, to which he belonged, had been founded in 1193 by seven young Florentines, who were united to each other by the most touching friendship.

design, and, above all, the colouring, attest a progress singularly rapid. As regards colour, the third picture, representing a young girl exorcised by the saint, is very superior to the two former in tone and harmony; and the same progressive improvement is perceptible in the two last, the colouring of the fifth leaving the spectator absolutely nothing to desire.

Andrea del Sarto was scarcely twenty-three when he terminated this series of *naïve* and simple productions, which do no less honour to his heart than to his pencil. In the two following years he began to reap the fruits of the disinterestedness he had shown in undertaking so long a work at a low price; several noble Florentines encouraged him by their patronage, and commissioned him to paint Madonnas and Holy Families, which have now disappeared, but of the value of which some idea may be formed from the Annunciation in the Pitti palace, painted immediately before the five or six devotional pictures which he executed for private individuals.

The colouring of this picture is admirable, the drawing correct, and it is impossible to imagine anything more graceful and animated than the heads of the angels; but the prosaic conception of the Virgin betrays the weak point of the artist,—namely, his incapacity to rise to idealism in art. Coarse propensities—at first but little resisted, and afterwards growing almost insurmountable—imposed new fetters on an imagination already indisposed to soar; and to crown the whole, his shameful passion for Lucrezia del Fedo took such possession of his mind, that he introduced her as a Madonna

into a great number of his pictures, thus reviving the scandal caused by the monk Lippi; and even carrying his impudence, sacrilege, and bad taste so far as to represent her with visible symptoms of pregnancy. This moral degradation did not prevent his progress in all those parts of his art which were compatible with naturalism, as the magnificent composition into which the portrait of this woman was introduced for the first time sufficiently proves.[1] I allude to the Birth of the Virgin, painted in fresco in the court of the Annunziata, and in which he displayed a grandeur of style, a richness of colouring, a grace and variety of expression, which become more striking when compared with the history of S. Filippo Benizzi, painted there three years before. In the next compartment he represented the Adoration of the Three Kings, but the divine object of their worship does not appear; and this manner of simplifying, or rather giving a new form to the old traditional composition of the Florentine school, is a kind of mutilation of the subject which would probably have excited more attention if the brilliancy of the colouring, and the excellent treatment of the accessories, had not engrossed the admiration of the spectator.

These two works added greatly to the esteem in which he was already held. Commissions for Holy Families and Madonnas now poured in upon him from all parts of Italy, and even from foreign countries; and so great was the number he executed, that it would be impossible to enumerate them all. One of the most

[1] Lucrezia was then the wife of Andrea, her first husband being dead.

celebrated is the Holy Family that he painted for the Florentine Gaddi; both on account of Vasari's pompous eulogium, and also from the numerous copies which Andrea himself made of it.[1] This work is indeed a masterpiece for vigour of colouring and the charm of chiaroscuro; but the head of the Madonna is again a portrait of Lucrezia, with her somewhat frowning air, and there is a constrained expression in the countenance of the infant Christ not usually found in his other pictures representing the same subject.

This Holy Family *di Gaddi* has been cited as marking the precise period when the manner of the artist underwent a change, and he adopted a larger and more grandiose style. To this period belong several Madonnas and Holy Families dispersed in the principal galleries of Germany and Italy, the famous head of Christ, and the chef-d'œuvre known under the name of the *Madonna di San Francesco.*

The three Holy Families in the collection of the King of Bavaria are very superior to those in the Belvedere at Vienna, and the Sciarra, Borghese, and Colonna palaces, all of which appear to have been nearly contemporaneous productions.[2] In the pictures of the Munich gallery even the landscapes seem to have been treated with peculiar predilection. The most interesting is that in which the Virgin and St. Elizabeth, who form with

[1] These copies are seldom literal, as we shall see by comparing the Holy Family of the Palazzo Barbarini at Rome, and that of the Marquis of Westminster in London, with the original at Florence.

[2] That is to say of the year 1515, to which also belongs the Annunciation in the Pitti palace.

the two children a singularly graceful group, appear to listen with ecstasy to the sounds of a celestial concert.

For suavity of pencil, beauty of colour, magical effect of chiaroscuro, and, in general, for all that constitutes perfection in the technical part of the art, the head of Christ which decorates the Michelozzi chapel in the church of the Annunziata leaves nothing to be desired by the most critical spectator; and although the type betrays the impotence of an imagination which could rarely rise above the graceful, it is infinitely less vulgar than the type of his Madonnas; and we may add, that this image of the Saviour is not unworthy of the position it occupies on this altar, near that miraculous picture[1] which has continued to be, for six hundred years, the mysterious object of popular devotion.

The Madonna *di San Francesco*, which justly figures among the chefs-d'œuvre of the Tribune at Florence, may be said to form the culminating point in the career of Andrea del Sarto. All the qualities of which we have hitherto spoken are here united, with a degree of perfection of which there are few examples in the monuments of art; and not only do we find in the extremities a style of design which appears imitated from Michael Angelo, but greater breadth in the drapery, more relief in the modelling, and even a more elevated expression in the head of the Virgin. As for the St. Francis and the infant Christ, they cannot be surpassed in grace and sim-

[1] The legend relates that the artist, having completed his work with the exception of the head of the Virgin, which he had several times vainly endeavoured to draw, fell into a profound sleep, during which an angel came and completed his task.

plicity; and if the countenance of St. John the Baptist expressed rather more animation and prophetical enthusiasm, the accessory figures would leave us nothing to desire.[1]

In 1518, Andrea del Sarto, then at the age of thirty, was invited by Francis I. to establish himself in France, where he had been preceded by Leonardo da Vinci, and was destined soon to be followed by Benvenuto Cellini, Il Rosso, and Primaticcio. The offer was too tempting not to be accepted with eagerness. His first work after his arrival in France was the portrait of the Dauphin, for which he was generously recompensed by his royal patron;[2] and this first encouragement, together with the interest which Louise d'Angoulême and the Constable de Montmorency testified for him, stimulating alike his zeal and imagination, the productions of his pencil succeeded each other with a rapidity no less profitable to himself than satisfactory to his patrons. Only three of the pictures executed by him at this time are preserved in the Louvre:[3] the first represents Charity between two children, and is remarkable for purity of design and simplicity of composition; but the influence of a more cloudy sky is perceptible in the

[1] The picture of *La Disputa*, in the Pitti palace, belongs to this period: it was much damaged by an inundation of the Arno in 1557.

[2] He received three hundred crowns; that is to say, six times the sum he had received for his five first frescos in the court of the Annunziata.

[3] Andrea Squazzella, the pupil of Andrea del Sarto, remained in France after the departure of the latter for Florence, and a picture by him in the Louvre will show us how completely he had appropriated to himself the style of his master. This accounts for the number of works attributed to Andrea which are to be found in France.

colouring. The same coldness of tone also pervades the second, representing a Holy Family, which is treated in the most touching and graceful manner; but we see in the third a vigorous reaction against local influences. This picture is equally admirable for drawing and expression; and were it not for the prosaic portrait of Lucrezia, whose image seemed to pursue him everywhere, we should not hesitate to give the preference to this brilliant and correct composition.

So great was the ascendancy that this imperious woman exercised, even at a distance, that, after having sullied the productions of his pencil, she succeeded by her obstinate selfishness in disgracing his character. Under the pretext of winding up his domestic affairs, Andrea del Sarto asked and obtained permission to make a journey to Florence, and even received from Francis I. a considerable sum for the purchase of pictures and statues. The unworthy temptation to remain in Florence, and appropriate this money to himself, was rendered irresistible by the prayers and tears of the beautiful Lucrezia; and not daring to show himself after this act of baseness and ingratitude, he hid his shame and remorse in the convent of the Annunziata, where, in return for the asylum granted him, he painted in the garden the evangelical parable of the Vineyard in two compartments, both now much injured: in the convent itself a dead Christ, remarkable for anatomical precision;[1] and an oil-picture, representing the Descent from the

[1] This picture now forms part of the collection in the Academia delle belle Arti at Florence.

Cross, surrounded by the personages who generally figure in this pathetic scene.[1]

During the seven years that followed the return of Andrea del Sarto to Florence, he executed many more paintings in fresco than in oil. It was in this style that he had first excelled; and as the long work, commenced ten years before for the confraternity of St. John the Baptist (*Compagnia dello Scalzo*), had made little progress during his absence, under his friend Franciabigio, he gladly returned, in his present melancholy condition, to a task which recalled such pure and delightful recollections. He therefore completed it by painting four other compartments, representing St. John seized and imprisoned by the officers of Herod; Herodias dancing before her father; the decollation of St. John; and the presentation of his head to the mother of Herodias. The admirable skill with which the artist has managed to conceal the horrors of the two last scenes is the more to be appreciated from its being very rarely found among the painters of the sixteenth century. In the third picture the executioner is placed in such a manner as not only to conceal his countenance, the harsh character of which might have produced a painful impression, but also the severed neck of the victim; and in the last the same object is partially hid by the arm of the attendant, who bears the bleeding head to her mistress.

The Madonna of the *porta Pinti*, so long celebrated from having been respected by the mercenary soldiers during the siege of 1529, has long since disappeared from

[1] This picture is now in the Belvedere gallery at Vienna.

its tabernacle, and is only known by the numerous copies made before its destruction.[1] We must place immediately after this work the frescos he executed for the Palazzo di Poggio a Cajano, and in which he was assisted by his faithful friend Franciabigio, and Pontormo, who was in all respects worthy to be their associate. Unfortunately for the three artists, the choice of the subjects was entrusted to the historian Paolo Giovio, whose classical pedantry did not allow him to imagine anything better than historical or mythological representations drawn from pagan antiquity. Andrea del Sarto had to represent Julius Cæsar receiving the homage of the animal kingdom; and although the lions, tigers, giraffes, and monkeys, as well as the architectural details, are treated with all the skill of which the artist was capable, it is easy to perceive that his imagination and pencil were ill at ease in this uncongenial sphere.

From 1521 to 1524 he does not appear to have painted a single fresco, and only three easel pictures, which form part of the collection in the Pitti palace. The first represents a St. John the Baptist, painted with considerable force; the second a Holy Family, admirably drawn and vigorously coloured, but rather more crowded with figures than usual; and the third, incontestably the most interesting, contains a sort of abridgment of the history of Joseph in miniature,—a style which seems so admirably adapted to the natural bent of his genius, that it is to be regretted he did not more frequently adopt it.

[1] This destruction happened under Cosimo, who wished to have the fresco removed. There is a copy in the Florence gallery, a second in the Corsini palace, and a third in the Stafford collection.

This work is in two compartments, and formed part of a piece of furniture with which the Florentine Borgherini, decorated the nuptial chamber of his son. The task was divided between Andrea del Sarto, Pontormo, Granacci, and Bachiacca, who excelled in painting figures of small dimensions; and it must be admitted that the choice of the artists did as much honour to the taste of Borgherini as the choice of the subject. We shall have occasion to speak afterwards of the compartments painted by Pontormo; those by Bachiacca now form part of a private collection;[1] while the portion executed by Granacci has disappeared.

Andrea del Sarto now resumed for the third time the frescos which he had commenced fifteen years before for the *Compagnia dello Scalzo*. The three first compartments in biographical order remained to be completed, namely, Zacharias in the Temple, the Visitation, and the Birth of St. John. It is in the last of these compositions, which certainly produces more effect than any of the preceding, that the artist seems to have been most happily inspired; and we gladly concur in Vasari's praise of it,—an excellent judge when he is not blinded by the prejudices of his school.

Finally, to complete his work, he painted four little figures of Faith, Hope, Justice, and Charity. Andrea del Sarto was not, however, equal to this mystical subject, which is beyond the sphere of naturalism, and his inspirations were not drawn from that high source which might

[1] I allude to the collection of Mr. Sandford, at Florence.

This collection was sold some years since in London.—*Translator's note.*

have enabled him to compete with the artists of the Umbrian school. When the imagination of the spectator has once been possessed by the three chiaroscuro figures of the same size in the gallery of the Vatican, the comparison which naturally results is formidable for all who have endeavoured to tread in the footsteps of Raphael.[1]

The long work which Andrea del Sarto had just completed in the court of the *Scalzo*, his return to it at intervals, and his almost constant practice in fresco painting, had given him a facility in this superior branch of the art to which few of his contemporaries had attained.

The masterpiece, so universally known under the name of the Madonna del Sacco, occupies the same place among his frescos as the *Madonna di San Francesco* among his easel pictures. This admirable group of three figures, disposed in simple and graceful attitudes, is very superior to the generality of the Holy Families he had hitherto painted; the drapery especially, often poor in his other pictures, is treated with exquisite taste; the type of the Virgin has much more elevation, and in general there is great beauty and even majesty in the forms.

[1] Andrea del Sarto copied a picture of Raphael's about this period (1525) with such singuler fidelity, that Julio Romano himself, who had worked on the original, refused to believe it to be a copy, until Vasari had shown him the proof of it. This picture was the famous portrait of Leo X. between two cardinals, which had been promised by Clement VII. to the Duke of Mantua, but of which Octavio di Medici would not deprive Florence. This copy, to which the recital of Vasari has given so much celebrity, is now in the Museum at Naples, and is still much admired, although it is not allowed to be, as Richardson pronounced it, superior to the original.

Before his departure for France, Andrea del Sarto had painted in the refectory of the convent of San Salvi, about a mile from Florence, four figures of Saints, and a representation of the Trinity ; and his work had been so successful that he was strongly urged to paint the Last Supper on the adjoining wall. We have already explained why the most important part of this work was above his powers. Here the head of Christ is inferior to that which he executed for the church of the Annunziata, but in all other respects this important composition deserves to occupy a distinguished place among the productions of the Florentine school in the sixteenth century. The happy division of the different groups, the finely characterised and varied expression of the heads, the total absence of the monotony which is almost unavoidable in such a subject, the vigorous tone which the colouring still preserves, notwithstanding the injury sustained by the picture during the inundation of 1557, all prove that the artist put forth all his powers in the execution of it, and at the same time explains the irresistible impression it produced on the Florentines in 1529, when, having pulled down the adjoining edifices, with a part of the church and convent, to prevent the besieging army from making use of them, they suddenly came upon the great fresco in the refectory; before which, to use the words of a contemporaneous historian, they stood mute with admiration, as if some invisible power had deprived them of speech and motion.[1]

Although mystical exaltation was perfectly foreign

[1] Varchi, *Storie Fiorentini.*

to the imagination of Andrea del Sarto, who was a naturalistic painter in the full sense of the term, his genius was nevertheless occasionally elevated and purified by the atmosphere of the cloister and the sanctuary. He had never been more happily inspired than when working for the Servite brothers in the convent of the Annunziata, in the monastery of San Salvi, or in the magnificent solitudes of Vallombrosa, where he was commissioned by the monks to paint a picture for the decoration of one of their chapels, named by them the *Paradisino* on account of its situation on the summit of a rock, from whence the eye commands the distant valley of the Arno. This composition is remarkable from the resemblance it bears to the works of Perugino in the disposition of the personages, who are not represented in action but merely in juxtaposition, without any relation with one another: it may truly be called an altar picture; and St. John the Evangelist, St. Bernard, St. Michael, and St. Giovanni Gualberto, are placed there as objects of veneration, and not as actors in an historical scene.[1]

During the last three years of his life, that is to say, from 1527 to 1530, Andrea del Sarto was involved in the fearful calamities which overwhelmed his country. With the exception of the St. James, which he painted for the banner of the confraternity of the same name,[2] the beautiful work he executed in the choir

[1] This picture is in the Academy at Florence, together with the miniatures which formed the *predella*, and which represent scenes from the lives of the four saints.

[2] This work is in the Uffizi at Florence.

of Pisa cathedral, near those of Beccafumi and Sodoma,[1] and another picture now in the Pitti palace,[2] all that he painted during these three years is in some way connected with the public calamities. In order to escape the ravages of the plague, which carried off as many as five hundred persons a-day, and of which Machiavelli has left us so appalling a description,[3] he took refuge in the convent of S. Pietro di Luco, where he painted three pictures, only one of which now exists, and is justly reckoned among the most beautiful productions of its author, if not for vigour of colouring and the magical effects of chiaroscuro, at least for symmetry of grouping, truth of expression, and for a certain pathos, which is confined within its proper limits, and is in perfect keeping with the subject: it represents that scene of grief around the body of Christ which the Italians, with admirable conciseness, designate a *pietà*. The only thing to be regretted is, that the conception is not original, and seems almost entirely borrowed from Fra Bartolomeo, as will be perceived on a comparison of the two works, both now in the Pitti palace.[4]

Amid the general consternation which now reigned in Florence, Andrea del Sarto thought with regret of

[1] It consists of five figures—St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. Catherine, St. Agnes, St. Margaret; nothing can surpass the grace of the two last.

[2] It represents the Madonna with the infant Jesus in the clouds, and several saints in adoration beneath.

[3] Machiavelli, *Opere*, p. 433.

[4] One of the pictures now lost represented the Visitation, the other was a repetition of the head of Christ, which he had painted for the church of the Annunziata.

the asylum he might have found in France, if he had not forfeited the favour of his royal protector. As a means of reconciliation, it was proposed to him to paint the Sacrifice of Abraham for Francis I.; and it must be admitted, to the glory of the artist, that he rarely worked with more spirit and success. There is a grandeur and dignity in the attitude of Abraham very rarely found in the productions of this painter; and Vasari mentions with enthusiasm the divine expression of firmness and faith which is displayed in the countenance of the father about to sacrifice his only son. The figure of the young Isaac, in itself a masterpiece of design, seems to have been borrowed from the famous group of the Laocoon.[1]

In 1529, when the troubles that agitated the republic had reached their height, Octaviano di Medici, who had not been included in the proscription of those who bore his name, wished to possess a Holy Family by the hand of Andrea del Sarto, who no doubt experienced a consoling distraction in the accomplishment of his task; for this picture, executed at the moment when the storm was gathering over his country, surpasses in grace all his preceding works, and supposes in the artist who could execute it under such circumstances an imperturbable serenity of mind, and a sort of poetical abstraction, of which we should hardly have believed him capable.[2]

[1] The original is said by some to be in the Museum of Lyons; according to others, it is in the Dresden gallery. They are probably both by the hand of Andrea del Sarto.

[2] This picture is in the Pitti palace. When the artist presented it to Octaviano, the latter was in such a state of distraction, that he scarcely noticed it. He afterwards atoned to Andrea for this neglect, by giving him double the price originally stipulated for the work.

Three captains who had been stationed on the hill of San Miniato, in order to make observations, having deserted their post and carried off the pay of their companies, the great council decided that they should be hung in effigy, and represented in this ignoble attitude on the front of one of the public edifices. Andrea was the painter selected to execute the latter part of the sentence, and he had no sooner accomplished this task than another of the same kind was imposed upon him, in order to disgrace the memory of three rebellious citizens, whom he was obliged to represent suspended by one foot to the gibbet.

Florence capitulated, and the plague entered her walls with the victorious army. Had Andrea del Sarto been as ardent a patriot as Michael Angelo Buonarotti, his last moments would have been bitter indeed; but if he was spared the pains of patriotism on his bed of death, he experienced others, perhaps, more cruel, from the abandonment of the unworthy Lucrezia, who considered herself excused from attending upon him when this duty was accompanied with danger. Such was the worthy termination of this unhappy connexion, which had dishonoured his youth, degraded his character and imagination, and empoisoned his whole existence. He died neglected and alone, and the confraternity of St. John the Baptist, as much from feelings of gratitude as charity, undertook the charge of his burial.[1]

[1] He left several pictures unfinished at his death; three of these are in the Pitti palace, and represent the Assumption of the Virgin, a subject with which the pencil of the artist had been hitherto little familiar. All the foregoing particulars of the life and works of Andrea del Sarto

He would not have been left thus alone in his last moments if his faithful friend Franciabigio, and his cherished disciple Puligo, had not already preceded him to the tomb. These two painters had felt his influence to such an extent, that their history seems to be comprised in his own. Franciabigio, after having quitted the atelier of Mariotto Albertinelli, had associated his fortunes to those of Andrea del Sarto, and the Servite brothers of the convent of the Annunziata gave them the opportunity of working together in the court of their church, where we may still see the beautiful fresco of Franciabigio mutilated by him in a fit of indignation against the monks for having uncovered it before the proper time. It represents the Marriage of the Virgin, and the arrangement resembles, in many respects, the famous Sposalizio of Raphael. At a later period, while one of the two friends was working in the palace of the King of France, the other became his successor and continuator in the court of the Scalzo, where he painted in two succeeding compartments, St. John, while still a child, receiving on his knees the blessing of his parents, before quitting the paternal roof, and his meeting with the youthful Christ in the wilderness. A certain child-like grace, observable especially in the first of these two compositions, constitutes its principal merit, but is not

have been drawn from Vasari, from Biadi (*Notizie inedite della Vita d'Andrea del Sarto, vaccolta da Manuscritti e Documenti autentici*, 1830), and above all from the recently published work of Adolphe Reumont, who has pursued his researches in the different localities with the most scrupulous exactness, and displayed no less sagacity than justice in his criticism. I am indebted to him for the chronological order I have observed.

sufficient to blind us to their inferiority, when compared with the works which surround them. Franciabigio should never have painted in grey tints or in chiaroscuro, because it was his colouring which gave the charm to his frescos, as may be seen in the court of the Annunziata, and in the Palazzo di Poggio a Cajano, where he painted Cicero borne in triumph by the Romans.

The most remarkable of his easel pictures is in the Dresden gallery, and might sustain an advantageous comparison with those of Andrea del Sarto for the grace and finish of the details, and even for the beauty and purity of the design. It is a fragment of the piece of furniture, in the decoration of which Pontormo and Bachiacca had also worked, as we have already mentioned. If it was indeed destined for the ornament of a nuptial chamber, it must be confessed that the choice of the subject was singular. It represents David perceiving Bathsheba from the terrace of his palace, who is bathing in the midst of her women; and this group is treated with a suavity of pencil, apparently intended to explain the violence of the temptation to which the king yielded.[1]

Puligo was formed in the pure and fertile school of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo; but, led by his natural tastes in another direction, he sought the society of artists equally given to a love of pleasure and a love of art, and fell by degrees into a hopeless state of degradation, which was

[1] Vasari tells us in the life of Franciabigio, that he had always in the summer undraped models in his studio.

at length terminated by a death no less shameful than that of Mariotto Albertinelli. I do not believe that Puligo has executed a single work worthy to occupy a place in the history of art. From frequenting the studio of Andrea del Sarto, he had succeeded in imitating to a certain extent the airs of his heads and the general tone of his colouring, but the only result of this imitation was a superficial resemblance, under which he endeavoured to conceal the poverty of his conceptions and the incorrectness of his drawing.

Among the scholars of Andrea del Sarto one alone showed true genius; this was Pontormo, who also studied under Leonardo da Vinci, Pier di Cosimo, and Mariotto Albertinelli. Whilst he worked under the latter, he painted, as the first effort of his pencil, an Annunciation, which Mariotto showed with pleasure to Raphael, who on seeing it predicted that the author would be a painter of the highest order. Before he had attained his twentieth year[1] this glorious prediction was already half accomplished by the production of two figures, representing Faith and Charity, which he painted in fresco above the portico of the church of the Annunziata. Vasari speaks of them with an enthusiasm not usual to him: *It was*, he says, *the finest work of its kind which had ever been seen*;[2] and when Michael Angelo beheld it for the first time, he exclaimed with enthusiasm—"If God spares this young man's life, he will raise our art to heaven."

[1] This was in 1512, and he was born in 1493.

[2] *Questa fu la più bella opera in fresco che insino allora fosse stata veduta giammai.—Vita di Pontormo.*

This fresco has now disappeared.

All these praises seem to have disquieted Andrea del Sarto, who had already felt jealous of his pupil on account of a Descent from the Cross, which he had caused him to paint below his picture of the Annunciation, and which, notwithstanding its small dimensions, eclipsed in some degree the principal composition. From this time he looked upon Pontormo as a dangerous rival, and when his fears were confirmed by the suffrages of Raphael and Michael Angelo, he treated his disciple in the same manner as Titian is accused of having treated Tintoretto, —that is to say, he expelled him his studio.

About four years after this ignoble proceeding, and while Andrea del Sarto was painting his famous head of Christ for the church of the Annunziata, Pontormo executed in the adjoining court the magnificent fresco which is still admired there, and which, in its grandiose and noble forms, and its bold and graceful design, announces the flexibility and elevation of a genius, which has something in common both with the style of Raphael and with that of Michael Angelo. The subject represented is the Visitation; and it is impossible not to be struck at the first glance with its superiority to that of Andrea del Sarto in the Scalzo, and, as far as the poetical treatment of the artist is concerned, even to that which is justly regarded as the masterpiece of Mariotto Albertinelli.

This beautiful work of Pontormo's is not, however, that to which Vasari, his biographer and contemporary, gives the preference over all others. A Madonna by the same artist, in the little church of S. Michele, is placed by him above all his earlier and later productions,

and considered, so to speak, as the culminating point in his career. Although the colouring has suffered in various parts of this picture, and the proportion between the light and shade is thus evidently deranged, it still preserves enough of its primitive beauty to justify the admiration of Vasari; although we would gladly dispense with a certain exaggeration of symmetry, in conformity to which the canvass is divided between the figures with geometrical exactness, and the attitudes, dimensions, and curved lines, correspond to each other on either side of the Madonna with a regularity that is neither picturesque nor natural. Moreover, the type of the Virgin is not at all superior to the school in which Pontormo was formed.

When Paolo Giovio, at the request of Pope Leo X., distributed their respective tasks to the artists selected to work at the decoration of the Palazzo di Poggio a Cajano, his pedantry did not allow him to imagine anything better fitted for the genius of Pontormo than insipid allegorical representations; as Autumn with his reapers, Pomona, Diana, and other divinities, with all the display of their mythological attributes. This work, interrupted in 1521 by the death of Leo X., and confided a second time to Pontormo by Clement VII. in 1534, was resumed by him with the greatest reluctance, and at last left unfinished.

We must not, however, attribute this want of energy to his repugnance for subjects drawn from the fabulous traditions of paganism, for he painted spontaneously, and even *con amore*, several pictures of this kind; one of which, representing a Venus or a Leda, is now in the

Florence gallery, and proves that in delicacy of modelling, grace of contour, and suavity of pencilling, he could sometimes equal the great masters of the Lombard or Venetian schools.

Upon the whole, I am not sure whether there is not a greater charm in the paintings he executed conjointly with Andrea del Sarto, Granacci, and Bachiacca, for the nuptial chamber of Borgherini, than in all his other compositions. We have already said that each of these artists had to represent some portion of the history of Joseph. Of the three compartments painted by Pontormo, two are preserved in the Uffizi; the fate of the third is unknown. In the first, Joseph is seen dragged to prison by the satellites of Pharaoh; and at a little distance a magnificent palace, with other episodes from the same story. In the second, especially remarkable for the skilful distribution of the groups, we see him presenting his father and all his family to the king on their arrival in Egypt, and in the representation of this biblical scene we find all the characteristics of the patriarchal style in a much higher degree than in any other of the contemporaneous works. This makes us the more regret the loss of the third compartment, in which, no doubt, he represented with the same animation the meeting of Joseph with his father Jacob.[1]

[1] Vasari mentions two other works of the same kind, the loss of which is no less to be regretted; namely, the death of the 11,000 martyrs, and the principal events in the life of St. John the Baptist, painted by him on the *carro della zecca*, which was carried in procession on the 25th of June.

Pontormo also executed several pictures for Francis I. Among others, a Resurrection of Lazarus, which has disappeared from the Louvre, and of which Vasari speaks in high praise. We now only possess a Holy Family by him, and the magnificent portrait of an engraver, his contemporary.

When Pontormo executed this work in 1523, he had commenced another, much more considerable, in the convent of the Certosa, near Florence; and the kind of life he there led was so well suited to his naturally unsociable and melancholy disposition, that he strove to prolong his enjoyment by delaying as much as possible the accomplishment of a task which he devoutly hoped might never be completed,

It was there that the first symptoms of the change that his imagination and style underwent first manifested themselves, and that he began to belie Michael Angelo's prediction. Dazzled by certain of Albert Durer's engravings, which fell into his hands, he imagined that the theory of the *beautiful* took its rise in Nuremberg, and precipitated himself into this new path with a blind enthusiasm, which Vasari justly laments; for it was to descend into a sphere very inferior to that in which his genius had till now freely and boldly moved. His first essay in this Ultramontane style was the Life of Jesus Christ, which he painted in one of the cloisters.

This infatuation was succeeded by another, which was more lasting, and no less fatal. Michael Angelo, having designed for the Marchese di Vasto a Christ appearing to the Magdalen, Pontormo added to it the charm of his colouring; and the result of this combination was so universally approved of that the two artists were obliged to associate their pencils for the production of a Venus, which was received with equal admiration.[1]

[1] Among the designs of Pontormo preserved in the gallery of Florence is a Prophet, the grandiose style of which is strongly impressed with originality, and proves that he could resemble Michael Angelo without becoming a plagiarist.

From this twofold success Pontormo concluded that the shortest way to arrive at fame and fortune was to appropriate to himself as much as possible the style and manner of Michael Angelo; thus completely abjuring his individuality, already considerably enfeebled. He carried this notion so far, that it became henceforth impossible to recognise his works. When Duke Cosimo, to gratify his mother, Donna Maria, employed him to paint gods and goddesses together, with allegorical figures of the seven liberal arts, in his house at Castello, the author of the frescos at Cajano was sought in vain in this work, which is a mere confusion of strange attitudes and extravagant contortions, equally offensive to the eye and to the taste.

Notwithstanding this symptom of premature decadence, he was employed, out of respect for his former reputation, in a still more important task in the church of S. Lorenzo; and this last proof of the rapid decline of his genius formed the sad and barren occupation of the eleven remaining years of his life: his death is even said to have been hastened by the extreme depression he felt in the consciousness of his own inferiority.

With him expired that mixed school, partly religious and partly naturalistic, which had shed such *éclat* on the Florentine school during the first half of the sixteenth century. The moment was approaching when pure naturalism was destined to triumph there without any admixture of the religious, or even the poetic element; and Angelo Allori, the cherished disciple of Pontormo, did not a little contribute to this triumph: but this artist belongs to a later period, the history of which will occupy

us hereafter. It may perhaps excite surprise that Michael Angelo and his immortal works have not occupied a more prominent place in that we have just surveyed; it is because his influence was slight, and almost imperceptible, on the great painters of whom we have spoken, and, in fact, was only decisively felt by Granacci and Bugiardini, who were only capable of following him at a great distance. The famous cartoon which he exposed in 1504, in one of the rooms of the Palazzo Vecchio, produced little fruit at first, and the great revolution he effected in the arts of design must rather be attributed to the paintings in the Sistine chapel, the value and effects of which we shall have occasion to discuss when we speak of the Roman school.

The same surprise will probably be felt at the silence we have maintained on the works of Leonardo da Vinci, so much studied and admired by his contemporaries: but it is not in his own country that the genius of this great man appears in all its brilliancy and grandeur; it is at Milan, from whence his influence spread through the neighbouring cities, and whence he had the glory of founding a school, which rivalled that of Florence in the excellence of its design, and that of Venice in the perfection of its colouring.

It is much to be regretted that the author did not carry out his intention of writing the history of the Roman and Milanese schools, an intention to which he more than once alludes in the course of this work.—*Translator's note.*

CHAPTER X.

Venetian School—The reason why Christian Poetry would assume the Legendary and Artistic form at Venice in preference to any other—Byzantine Painters—Works of Giotto and his Disciples—Pagan School founded at Padua by Squarcione, and continued by Mantegna—Relations of the Venetian School with the Umbrian on one hand, and with the German on the other—The Vivarini at Murano—The two Bellini, pupils of Gentile da Fabriano—Stability given by Giovanni Bellini to the purely Religious School—His Disciples and Continuators at Venice, Cima da Conegliano, Basaïti, Carpaccio, Mansueti, Catena, Francesco and Girolamo da Santa Croce; and in the other cities of the Venetian Territory, from Bergamo to Udine, Cariano, Previtali, Bissolo, Pennacchi, and Pellegrino da San Daniele, &c.—Distinctive Qualities of the Venetian School—Religious and Patriotic Enthusiasm.

It is not in the history of the republic of Venice that we expect to meet with Christian poetry; the Venetian drama, the Venetian epic, are expressions which have not yet found a place in the enumeration of the literary productions of modern nations: Venetian eloquence has not excited much more attention, and as the lyrical, elegiacal, or pastoral compositions of this people have been neither numerous nor remarkable enough to awaken the serious inquiry of foreign writers, Venice, despoiled of her political and commercial greatness, has not even obtained that homage which has ever been paid to fallen nations when, in the days of their prosperity, they have laid up a store of glory and dignity for the period of their decline.

This injustice may be traced to several causes, the most important of which is the incompleteness of the Venetian dialect; for the language of the inhabitants of the Lagunes, the softest, simplest, and most harmonious of any spoken in Italy, is so limited in its resources that it becomes impossible to employ it whenever dignity and force of language are required; and the Venetians themselves were so fully aware of this defect, that the orators charged to pronounce the funeral oration of their doges, captains, and other illustrious men, thought themselves obliged to have recourse to a dead language in order worthily to express the sentiments of gratitude and admiration which the hero had awakened in the hearts of his fellow-citizens. Still more did the authors of heroic poems feel under the obligation of shackling their thoughts in an idiom which, besides the disadvantage of not having been formed for their use, was further objectionable in that it created a sort of privileged and learned poetry, from which the people were excluded, and thus a true and popular poetry was prevented from circulating among all the members of the social body.

Latin, therefore, became the language of enthusiasm and imagination among the patricians, and the learned men who had the charge of their education; victories on land and sea were celebrated in Latin; the annals of Venice were written by the historians of the republic in Latin; and from an excess of fanaticism, which seems quite incomprehensible, even the Divine Comedy was translated into Latin.

All the monuments of this bastard literature are still in existence, but no one has yet been disposed to rescue

them from the oblivion to which they were consigned at their birth. It seems to have been the custom to pass them over as valueless and non-existent in the inventory of the intellectual wealth of modern Italy. This judgment may have been sometimes too severe, but the principle on which it was formed was a just one—the injustice has consisted in supposing that poetry is only to be found under certain determinate forms, as the epic and the drama, and because Venice had produced nothing worthy of attention in either, to affirm that the genius of the Venetian people was not at all commensurate to the importance of the part they had played in history. It has not been inquired, whether the poetical spirit which was always fermenting in the minds of that ardent people did not find a different issue, and whether, in the absence of those classical forms which had been usurped by another language, it did not assume others more original and more accessible to the popular imagination. Such an inquiry would have led to very different conclusions to those which have been hitherto formed on the subject of Venetian poetry, now accounted the poorest of any, and nevertheless so rich, varied, great, and marvellous, when considered under the twofold form of legend and of art.

At Venice, as, indeed, throughout the Christian world, the legend was the earliest form of poetry; and if it did not strike root there deeper than elsewhere, it at least adorned the infancy of the republic with an infinite variety of flowers, which retained all their beauty and freshness in the proudest days of its prosperity. Each temple, monastery, religious or national monument, was

surrounded from its foundation with its own peculiar legends, which increased with every succeeding century; and, not satisfied with these local traditions, the people took possession of those of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Greece, which became naturalised in the Lagunes in proportion as the relics of saints and martyrs were transported there, in order to preserve them from the outrages of the Infidels, now become masters of those countries in which the earliest Christian churches had been founded.

The ardour of the Venetians for this species of appropriation continued throughout the whole of the middle ages; and we may affirm that, in this respect, no European nation is so rich in foreign spoils as the Venetian, without involving as a consequence any loss of originality or fertility to the national genius. On the contrary, this fusion of indigenous and extraneous elements gave rise to a legendary poetry more rich and varied than any other, and quite unique of its kind, from its uniting the deep meaning of the German and Italian legend with the charm of the more brilliant creations of the Oriental imagination. Such was the favourite form of Venetian poetry until the commencement of the fifteenth century, when art was substituted for legend in obedience to some mysterious and infallible instinct, which divined the moment when this substitution became necessary in order to rescue the national genius from the stagnation with which it was threatened.

It is not that Venice could not trace the introduction and cultivation of the arts among her citizens to a much more remote period: there, as in all the other great cities of Italy, such pretensions are easily supported by an im-

posing array of dates and names, which, in that obscure period, elude the search of the inquirer; but the origin of the Venetian school, in the strictly national acceptation of the term, cannot be traced further back than the fifteenth century. Before this period the republic had, no doubt, availed herself of the talents of foreign artists, whether Greeks or Florentines, and had employed them in the decoration of her churches and palaces; but, with the exception of certain superficial attempts at imitation, their works produced no fruit: and this hopeless sterility seems to have been more particularly incurable in the Byzantine painters, who were invited to Venice several centuries before those of Florence, and whose relations with Venice were indeed never totally interrupted. It is important to authenticate these almost continuous relations, precisely because they have had no influence on the Venetian schools, which, notwithstanding the pretended advantage of this early connexion with Byzantium, is the latest of all the schools, and is more completely opposed than any other in its style, types, and, in fact, in every distinctive qualification, to the gloomy inspirations which emanated from the ateliers of Constantinople.

We hear of Greek artists who came as early as the sixth century to adorn the churches of Grado and Torcello with mosaics.[1] A more celebrated colony was invited by the doge Selvo towards the end of the eleventh century, and employed upon the decoration of the basilica of St. Mark; and scarcely fifty years had elapsed when the taking of Constantinople by the Crusaders, in 1204,

[1] Lanzi, *Scuola Veneziana, epoca prima.*

deluged Venice with Byzantine painters and their productions.[1] Indeed, on this occasion they became completely naturalised there; for from this time the traditions they introduced at Venice never entirely disappeared, and subsequently, when they were for ever eclipsed by the national school, they took refuge in a little Greek church, where they still continue to exist.[2]

As the small number of works executed in imitation of these Byzantine models did not exercise the slightest influence on the character and development of Venetian art, it would be useless to weary the reader with so barren a nomenclature. Let us rather inquire whether the germs deposited in the same localities by Giotto and his disciples did not fructify there to a greater extent, and whether they did not prepare and determine the course which the national genius should take when it had ripened sufficiently to commence its work in this new direction?

We have spoken elsewhere of the works executed by Giotto in the north of Italy, and more particularly at Padua, in the *Cappella dell'Arena;* but we have not said anything of the disciples formed by him in that city, and who afterwards propagated around them the reform of which their master was the first author. Some of these proved themselves worthy to be his successors. Giovanni and Antonio of Padua, as well as their compatriot Giusto,

[1] Rannuzio, *Guerra di Costantinopli*, lib. iii. p. 34.

[2] This is the church of San Giorgio behind the Ducal palace. On the high festivals many pictures in the Byzantine style are exposed there; among them are modern ones, which they have endeavoured to paint in a style exactly similar to the others.

decorated their country with frescos, several of which still exist, and fully justify the admiration they excited among their contemporaries. The finest are those with which the walls and roof of the baptistery are covered. They represent Christ surrounded by the elect, and display as it were an epitome of celestial glory to the eye of the spectator beneath. This was the first time that this kind of illusion, beset with so many difficulties, had been attempted in art; and it is interesting to compare this first essay, in which the beatified are regularly disposed in concentric circles, and in stiff and uniform attitudes, with the magnificent cupolas of the sixteenth century, in which the most scientific foreshortening is combined with harmony of colour and skilful gradation of light and shade, forming one of the most radiant spectacles which art is capable of producing.

To these three disciples of Giotto we must add the name of Guariento, a native of the same town, and formed in the same school as themselves, but very superior to them in the originality of his productions, some of which were still in existence, although in a very dilapidated condition, a few years since, at Bassano. The most important of all his works, that with which he ornamented the great council-chamber at Venice in 1365, has unfortunately long since perished. The subject, chosen no doubt either by the doge, Marco Cornaro, who invited Guariento, or by the patricians who surrounded him, clearly showed the desire of the republic of Venice to stamp a religious and patriotic character on the fine arts. Above the tribunal, Christ was represented placing a crown of gold on the head of the Virgin, who was sur-

rounded by a glorious company of cherubim and seraphim, and below was inscribed the four beautiful lines of Dante:

> " L' amor che mosse già l' eterno padre
> Per figlia aver di sua Deita trina
> Costei che fu del figlio suo poi madre
> Dell' universo qui la fa regina."

This painting was, therefore, intended to represent the inauguration of the Virgin as Queen of Venice; and in order that the presiding idea in this pious composition might be still more clearly explained, St. Antony and St. Paul the hermit were introduced, dividing the bread brought them by a raven in their solitude, as a symbol of the fraternity which should reign among citizens. The other parts of the chamber were covered with historical compositions, representing those battles and sieges which reflected the greatest glory on the armies of the republic, and the remembrance of which it was important to transmit to posterity. Thus the whole future of Venetian art was there, and the cycle in which it was destined to move was traced in advance in the due order of subordination; I mean, that precedence was given to the religious and mystical element over the social and patriotic element. It may be regarded as the first taking possession of the domain of art—as the interpretation of a great national thought by a foreign pencil.

The school to which Guariento belonged continued to flourish at Padua,[1] and to supply painters who decorated

[1] It would be easy to give a long list of his pupils or imitators, but I shall dispense myself from this on account of the slight influence they have exercised on art. It will be sufficient to mention Avanzi and Aldighieri, whose frescos still exist in the chapel of S. Felice in Sant' Antonio, at Padua.

the churches of all the neighbouring towns; and so great was its development at the commencement of the fifteenth century, that Squarcione, who was then its head, numbered as many as 137 pupils in his atelier. But here we shall have several important distinctions to establish.

The school of Padua was incontestably the most fertile and brilliant of all those founded by Giotto beyond the limits of his country, and it long appeared probable that she would play the most important part in the high destiny reserved for Christian art in the north of Italy, and people the neighbouring cities with her colonies; at the end of the fourteenth century she was already without a rival, and she might be said to have monopolised to herself the education of artists at the commencement of the fifteenth. But at this time a fatal change took place, the final result of which, after an apparent prosperity of fifty years, was her utter decline and extinction.

Squarcione was the first to give a new direction to this school, thrown headlong by him into pagan art, for which he entertained a blind admiration. Not content with studying and collecting the remains of antiquity in Italy, he extended his travels to Greece, from whence he brought a number of masterpieces, now for the most part mutilated or destroyed; and after a long absence, during which his zeal had continued unabated, he returned to Padua, proud of his new conquests, and there displayed, to the admiration of his fellow-citizens, the finest collection yet made of statues, torsos, bas-reliefs, and se-

pulchral urns. Less than this would have sufficed to inflame the popular imagination in a city rendered peculiarly classical by its University, and which aspired, as its highest glory, to contribute in the arts, as in literature, to the glorious revival of paganism.

The rarity of Squarcione's works makes it impossible for us to determine with precision the degree to which he was himself influenced by this infatuation for paganism. The chiaroscuro paintings which formerly decorated the portico of the Franciscans at Padua, and which were regarded as his finest productions, were unmercifully whitewashed in the last century; and a very dilapidated fragment of this great composition, discovered in a small cloister now used as a wood-house, is, if I mistake not, all that now remains of Squarcione in his native city.

But the effects of the paganism introduced by him into the school of Padua may be discovered in the works of his principal disciples, and particularly in those of Andrea Mantegna, the most celebrated of all, and the most capable of sustaining a rivalry with the greatest painters of the Florentine school.

We must, however, admit, to the honour of Mantegna, that he did not, like many others, content himself with a superficial imitation of the productions of ancient art, but often appropriated its inmost spirit with a power of assimilation which causes the more regret at the loss of such valuable time, which might have been exclusively devoted to the composition of more vital works. This strong spirit of originality is particularly striking in his

allegories, and the engravings in which he has represented the triumphs of Julius Cæsar.[1]

But from entering into the views of his master, and continually copying statues, casts, and bas-reliefs, he ended at last by giving his figures the rigidity and coldness of marble, and petrifying, so to speak, all the productions of his pencil. Provided his outline was correct, his forms elegant, the folds of his drapery disposed with regularity, and the mechanical rules of the art scrupulously observed, it seemed indifferent to him whether his compositions were animated or lifeless.[2] This blind docility on the part of the young Mantegna, together with the energetic and rapid growth of his talent, so moved the paternal feelings of Squarcione, that he adopted him as his son.[3] But a short time after, a Venetian artist, who was gifted with a far more poetical imagination, and whose works were consequently impressed with a more poetical character, having arrived at Padua, and exposed the pedantry and dryness of the doctrines professed by Squarcione, the fidelity of his cherished disciple began to waver; and the daughter of the stranger, who was no other than Giacomo Bellini, completed the conquest of his imagination and heart. Become, by this apostasy, the brother and fellow-disciple of the famous Giovanni

[1] The number of Mantegna's engravings does not exceed forty. Besides the triumphs, there are bacchanalian subjects, marine deities, &c.; but always in a chaste and severe style. Neither the precise period at which he began to engrave nor the name of his master are known.

[2] Lanzi himself, who certainly set no great value on orthodoxy in matters of painting, reproaches him with this.—*Scuola Veneziana, epoca prima.*

[3] Mantegna painted his first picture in 1448, at the age of seventeen —Vasari, *Vita di Mantegna.*

Bellini, who plays so important a part in the history of Venetian painting, his style and colouring improved by degrees; but he never entirely emancipated himself from the yoke which his first master had imposed, and continued to regard the imitation of the fine works of antiquity as the great aim of art. The first work that he executed in the church of the Eremitani at Padua, and which represents the history of St. James, was severely criticised by Squarcione himself, who pronounced the figures to be stiff, and alike devoid of nature and life, and declared it would have been better to have painted them in grey tints, so that the colouring might be in harmony with the design. Although this criticism was envenomed by rancour, and was almost revolting in the mouth of Squarcione, Mantegna felt that it was not without justice; and in order not to incur this reproach in future, he set himself to draw from nature for a considerable time before he began the history of St. Christopher, which he was to paint in the same chapel, and which is, in fact, a more animated composition. The same progress may be remarked in the St. Mark which he painted for the church of Sta. Giustina; and on whose countenance he wished to express the meditation of the philosopher and the enthusiasm of the prophet.[1]

Without enumerating all the works executed by Mantegna during a period of more than fifty years at Padua, Verona, and Rome, where he was invited by Innocent VIII., as well as at Mantua, whither he was

[1] The undertaking was, no doubt, meritorious; but whoever has seen the picture in the Milan gallery will admit that it was beyond the powers of the artist.

attracted by Ludovico Gonzaga, or following Vasari in his tedious recapitulation of all those either destroyed or dispersed in the various European galleries, I shall rather describe a few of his most remarkable productions: viz. the celebrated *Madonna della Vittoria;* the great picture in three compartments in S. Zeno at Verona; and, above all, the two allegorical compositions now in the Louvre, and which must belong to the period when his genius had attained all the force and maturity of which it was susceptible. In the first of these we see Apollo and the nine Muses, who are dancing to the sound of his lyre; above stand Mars and Venus, who have nothing in common, either in feature or attitude, with the cynical voluptuousness of paganism; on one side is Vulcan in his forge, on the other Mercury, with Pegasus. The figures disposed in contrast to one another have evidently some allegorical connexion, not easy to be understood, with the principal group. Some of the Muses are of exquisite beauty, without being copies from antique statues;[1] and the figure of Venus, of a type no less original and graceful, is severe and chaste, notwithstanding her nudity, and triumphantly proves that the Christian imagination was capable of conceiving the *beautiful* in an independent manner, even when treating profane subjects.

In the second picture, which represents a kind of struggle between the good and evil principle, the contrast is still more striking,—for here the hideous forms of the Vices and infernal Genii are placed in opposition to the

[1] Julio Romano's Dance of the Muses is evidently borrowed from Mantegna.

celestial figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity. No man of modern times has possessed a stronger feeling for Christian art, or shown a greater degree of candour and intelligence in his æsthetic judgments, than Frederick Schlegel, who, having visited the Louvre during the period when, by a brutal abuse of the rights of conquest, the masterpieces of the different schools of Italy were accumulated there, did not fear to confess, at the risk of passing for a barbarian, that in the whole of this vast collection no works attracted his attention more frequently than these two allegorical compositions of Mantegna;[1] and the profound signification and grandiose character of the second produced such a powerful effect on his imagination, that he considered it worthy to be compared with the sublime allegories in the Divine Comedy. He has not hesitated to place this beautiful composition above the famous *Madonna della Vittoria*, also in the Louvre, and which the Marquis of Mantua commissioned Mantegna to paint in memory of the victory he obtained over Charles VIII. at Fornova.[2] This work is worthy of its author's great reputation in its scientific design, the imposing severity of the accessory figures, and above all, the charm of the colouring in the details of the flowery arbour under which the Virgin with the infant Christ, St. Elizabeth with the little St. John, the four patrons of Mantua, and Francesco Gon-

[1] Vor keinem Gemälde habe ich hier öfter und länger verweilt, &c. See his Letters from Paris in 1803, in the sixth volume of his works. Vienna edition.

[2] The date of this victory is 1495; Mantegna was, consequently, almost seventy when he completed this picture.

zaga, form a symmetrical, but somewhat confused group, from the comparatively small space in which they are disposed.

In addition to his veneration for antique statues, Squarcione had communicated to his pupil his own very decided taste for lineal perspective, and which may probably be traced to his early acquaintance with the marvels executed by Paolo Uccelli at Padua. Mantegna, who felt himself gifted with a peculiar talent for this branch of painting, cultivated it with such zeal and success, that he soon surpassed his contemporaries and successors, not only in the scientific combination of the lines connected with the point of sight, but also in the depth and extent of his theoretical knowledge, since he composed a treatise on this subject.[1] The giants painted in chiaroscuro by Paolo Uccello in the Palazzo dei Vitelliani at Padua, also furnished him with an object of study and emulation; and by dint of constantly exercising his pencil in every variety of foreshortening, and habituating himself to overcome the greatest difficulties in this branch of the art, he at length succeeded in producing that astonishing figure of the dead Christ now in the Milan gallery, and which, from the peculiar position of the body, with the feet towards the spectator, presented a problem to the artist, the solution of which had been hitherto reputed impossible.

[1] Lomazzo, *Idea del tempio della Pittura*, p. 15. Subsequently, at page 40, he says that Mantegna was the first who made the Italians acquainted with the science of perspective. Daniele Barbaro, patriarch of Aquilea, uses the same inflated language in his *Pratica della Prospettiva*.

It will excite surprise that, among the scholars of Mantegna, there should not be a single painter who has left a name behind him in the north of Italy. Neither Ansuino di Forli nor Buono di Ferrara, who both worked with him in the church of the Eremitani at Padua;[1] nor Lorenzo de Lendinara, who, according to Vasari, passed at Padua for an excellent painter;[2] nor Monsignori of Verona, who also excelled in perspective, and, like his master, was attracted to Mantua by the munificence of the Gonzaga;[3] nor, finally, the two sons of Mantegna himself, so intimately initiated in his doctrines, and so deeply versed in the science of foreshortening, which they, no doubt, considered as the most valuable portion of their fraternal inheritance: in a word, not one of these painters, who were all considered worthy of immortality by their contemporaries and patrons, figures now in the history of art, unless it be in sterile nomenclatures.[4]

This deplorable result proves more incontestably than any theory, the fatal influence which the pagan element exercised over the arts of imagination, whenever it was not strictly subordinated to the religious element, which alone contains the germ of vital traditions. How great is the difference in this respect between Milan and Mantua! These two cities, being without schools of

[1] *Notizia di Opere di disegno, publicita da Morelli*, p. 23.

[2] Vasari, *Vita di Mantegna.*

[3] One of his best pictures, representing St. Bernardino and St. Louis, is in the Brera.

[4] Lanzi speaks of a multitude of fresco paintings on the façades of the houses and churches of Mantua, and of an equal number of oil pictures which were to be found in private galleries: all these are now dispersed throughout Europe, under the imposing name of Mantegna.

their own, invited foreign artists to establish themselves precisely at the same period, in order to supply this deficiency; but the founder of the first was Leonardo da Vinci, whose genius did not require the assistance of the antique, and who sought in inspirations of another kind guarantees for the greatness and durability of the Milanese school. In the Mantuan school, on the contrary, a tendency prevailed which excluded development and originality, and reduced art to the imitation of dead works, and to the more or less learned application of geometry to painting. 'It would seem as if some fatality were attached to this unlucky town of Mantua: for at the moment when the defective school of Mantegna was about to expire, she received with transports of admiration the cynical Julio Romano, whose pencil, utterly devoid of true poetry, was always incomparable when employed on licentious subjects.

Happily for Venice she did not seek her inspirations at Mantua, nor even at Padua, which being then included in the territory of the republic, was still a more dangerous neighbour; the Venetian school, on the contrary, derived her inspirations from a much purer source, and presented in consequence, for nearly a century, the spectacle of a development analogous to that which has already excited our admiration in the Umbrian school. It must not be supposed that she attained this high position by her own unaided efforts; on the contrary, foreign influences abounded in this school more than in any other, but she always rejected with an admirable instinct all those that were not in harmony with her eminently religious tendencies. The famous monk Fi-

lippo Lippi, who by his naturalism contributed more than any other artist to corrupt the Florentine school, dazzled the imagination of the Paduans by the productions of his brilliant pencil, and some rumour of the marvellous frescos he was said to have executed in the church of S. Antonio and in the chapel of the *Podestà* must have reached the ears of the Venetians;[1] nevertheless, it is certain that he was not commissioned to undertake a single work in that city. Still more surprising was their neglect of Mantegna, whose works were so much esteemed throughout Italy, and who, in the sphere of attraction of which he was the centre, exercised a sort of patriarchal dictatorship, from which very few artists sought to withdraw themselves. Venice alone, of all the neighbouring cities, never recognised it, and notwithstanding the distance that intervened, preferred placing herself in communication with the pure and mystical school, which then began to flourish in the mountains of Umbria; and this predilection, based on the profoundest sympathy, manifested itself in time to take root in the Venetian mind before the great invasion of paganism and naturalism at the end of the fifteenth century.

The most important of the travelling painters (*peintres voyageurs*) who contributed to establish these fraternal relations between the two schools are Crivelli and Gentile da Fabriano, who each worked in the country of the other,—the Umbrian Gentile at Venice, and the Venetian Crivelli in the town of Fabriano itself. The latter was

[1] Vasari, *Vita di Fra Filippo Lippi*. Morelli, *Notizia di Opere di disegno*, pp. 5, 28, and note 5. These two frescos have been destroyed.

particularly admired for the vigour and freshness of his colouring, which retains its brilliancy to this day, as his works in the Milan gallery prove; but it would seem that those which he executed after a longer residence in Umbria possessed, besides this merit, that of grace, expression, and movement, and had even something of the *peruginesque* character by anticipation,[1] at least if it be true that one of his works, which formerly decorated the church of the Franciscans at Macerata, was long attributed by a local tradition, which on this occasion cannot be relied on, to the pencil of Perugino.[2]

As for Gentile da Fabriano he was received with the most decided sympathy at Venice, not only by the artists, but also by the patricians whose taste was still uncorrupted, and even by the senate, who granted him a gold ducat daily, with the privilege of wearing the dress of a senator. Of all the works so munificently recompensed not a vestige now remains; but until their destruction to make room for those of the great masters of the sixteenth century, they had been for more than a hundred years[3] an object of admiration and emulation to the Venetian artist, who was accustomed to venerate the memory of Gentile, and to regard him, so to speak, as the founder of the Bellini school.

Giacomo Bellini was his first pupil; but as the paintings he executed at Venice and Padua have disappeared, and

[1] Lanzi, *Storia Pittorica, Scuola Veneziana, epoca prima.*

[2] Crivelli, though he worked but little at Venice, was very proud of being a citizen of that republic. He has inscribed on almost all his pictures—The work of Crivelli the Venetian; or, of Crivelli Soldier of Venice; or, Crivelli Knight of Venice.

[3] Gentile da Fabriano went to Venice in 1420.

his pictures elsewhere are extremely rare, it is impossible to determine how far he was under the influence of his master. We only know that he preserved a twofold remembrance of him in his own family, by giving the name of *Gentile* to one of his sons, and by painting with his own hand the portrait of his benefactor and friend.[1]

Gentile Bellini and his brother Giovanni at first cultivated in common the precious traditions which they inherited, and when they afterwards separated they continued to cherish a warm affection for each other; but before we give any account of their respective works, it is important to notice the relations which were established about this period between the Ultramontane artists and the Venetian school.

Christian art had nothing to fear from that quarter, for, owing to the absence of profane monuments, it had been maintained in all its purity in Germany, on the Rhine, and in Flanders; hence the painters of all these countries were always received with special favour at Venice, as the numerous works they left behind them testify, and which, until the end of the following century, were permitted to retain their place beside the masterpieces of the school of Titian in the galleries of the most illustrious patrician families.

This reciprocal communication was commenced by John of Bruges and his disciple Memmelinck, and was

[1] This portrait afterwards came into the possession of the Bembo family at Padua.—Morelli, *Notizia di Opere di disegno*, p. 18.

The Palazzo Vendramin formerly possessed a large collection of pencil drawings by Giacomo Bellini.—*Ibid.* p. 18.

continued very actively by their successors. Venice formerly possessed a large picture by the first of these artists, representing the Adoration of Christ by the Magi,[1] not to speak of several others painted by him for private collections.[2] As for Memmelinck, the most *suave*, graceful, and mystical of all the painters of this school, his name could not fail to be very popular in Venice, on account of the incomparable miniatures with which he adorned the famous breviary of Cardinal Grimani, and which passed even in Italy for one of the greatest marvels of art.[3] Other productions, no less charming, were to be found in the collection of Pietro Bembo in the Pasqualino palace,[4] and above all, in the gallery of Cardinal Grimani himself,[5] the richest of any in Ultramontane paintings, as it contained, besides the masterpieces of Memmelinck, the exquisitely simple landscapes of Ouwater and Patenier.[6] A Hell by Boss, as well as other fantastic compositions of that artist,[7] the works of Gerard of Harlem and Albert Durer, not to speak of others by unknown artists, and which were designated in the north of Italy by the general name of *Opere*

[1] In the church of the Servites.—Sansovino, *Descrizione di Venezia*, p. 57.

[2] *Notizia di Opere di disegno*, pp. 14, 45.

[3] See page 183.

[4] *Notizia di Opere di disegno*, pp. 17, 74.

[5] The portrait of Memmelinck, painted by himself, might be seen there; also that of Isabella of Aragon, and several small figures of saints.

[6] Joachim Patenier of Dinant generally animated his landscapes with religious subjects.

[7] Lomazzo says that Boss was unrivalled, and *veramente divino* in the representation of strange and terrible dreams and visions.—Lib. vi. cap. xxxvi. p. 350

ponentine, or works in the Western manner,[1] probably in opposition to the Byzantine or Oriental manner, which had only retained a small number of admirers.

Certain Venetian artists having long contemplated these Ultramontane marvels, conceived the idea of crossing the Alps, and seeking instruction at the original source of these lofty inspirations. One of these painters, named Giacomo Barberino, travelled much in Germany and the Low Countries, and so entirely appropriated the manner of the painters whose acquaintance he formed, that it was often almost impossible not to confound their works with his.[1] Another painter, named Jacometto, principally confined himself to the imitation of the miniatures and other works of small dimensions, which Memmelinck and his compatriots had executed in Italy, and his success in this style must have been very complete, since the anonymous author of the notice published by Morelli is often at a loss to distinguish the works of Jacometto from his inimitable models.[2]

During almost the whole of the fifteenth century the Germanic impress was preserved among the Vivarini, in the little island of Murano, by whom it was transmitted from one generation to another as a portion of the family inheritance. Without seeking to dissipate the obscurity in which the origin of this solitary school is involved,

[1] *Andò in Alemagna e Borgogna, e presa quella maniera, fece molte cose . . . . .* It is evident that *Borgogna* here means the states of the Duke of Burgundy, of which the Low Countries formed part.—*Notizia, etc.* p. 77.

[2] *Notizia*, pp. 61, 74, 81, 84.—It is only from this notice that the name of Jacometto is known. I do not think that he is mentioned either by Vasari or Lanzi.

it will suffice to point out its manner and its types, so perfectly foreign to the Byzantine traditions, and so striking in their resemblance to certain German pictures of the same period, in which inelegant proportions and angular forms still predominated, combined with great freshness of colouring. But, independently of the proofs that such an analogy might furnish, we find a still more direct one in the frequent mention made of a certain Giovanni d'Alemanno,[1] the coadjutor of Antonio Vivarini, who flourished about 1440, and who, having lost this first companion of his labours, received as his assistant his brother, Bartolomeo Vivarini. Many of Bartolomeo's works still remain to us, and we may form an idea of his progress by comparing the St. Augustine in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, executed by him in 1478, with the finely-modelled figure of Christ issuing victoriously from the tomb, now in the church of S. Giovanni in Bragora.[2] Lastly, Luigi Vivarini, who was invited to compete with Giovanni Bellini and Vittore Carpaccio in the Confraternità di S. Girolamo at Venice, where he almost equalled the first and far surpassed the second, may be regarded as the last artist of this semi-national, semi-foreign school, which from this time became absorbed in the metropolitan school, thus composed of many elements, but sufficiently powerful to assimilate them all to herself.

[1] Lanzi, *Scuola Veneziana, epoca prima.*

[2] The date of 1498, formerly to be found on this picture, has been effaced. The same Vivarini furnished designs for the figures painted on the windows of the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, and which are so much admired.

It must be confessed that Venice was more favourably situated than any of the other cities of Italy for this work of assimilation. Her lagunes were become the centre of European commerce, and this enabled her artists to make conquests and gain inspirations in every quarter, while their natural instinct led them to reject such as might impede the progress of Christian art. These inspirations were to be found, on one side, in the Ultramontane schools, so full of originality, youth, and life; on the other, in the Umbrian school, possessing greater elegance of style, happier in its choice of forms and in the expression of the inmost aspirations of the soul, while this did not prevent their availing themselves of the recent progress made by their neighbours at Padua in geometrical perspective and the science of foreshortening: so that the combination of all these advantages, together with the encouragements of every kind which the Venetian painters received from their countrymen, and still more the religious and national tendency which public taste had impressed upon painting, made it impossible that this favourite form of Christian poetry should not receive a more magnificent and grandiose development in the Venetian than in any other school, not excepting that of Florence.

The series of artists who participated in the impulse given to art at Venice commences with the two Bellini, whom we have mentioned as having been the disciples of Gentile da Fabriano, either directly or through the medium of their father; the elder of these two brothers was considered to excel in the theory, the younger in the practice of art. Giovanni, who possessed the greatest

tenderness and fervour of soul, was continually absorbed in mystical reveries; Gentile, on the other hand, whose imagination was less ardent, was often captivated by symmetrical proportions; and although he gave this element a subordinate place in his studies, his admiration was excited by the fragments of antique sculpture, which Gerolomo Malatini their master in perspective placed before them. During his residence at Constantinople he copied the bas-reliefs on the column of Theodosius,[1] and even placed a very beautiful though somewhat mutilated statue of Venus in his atelier.[2] The public admiration was consequently divided between the two brothers, according to the diversity of taste, and in a contemporary work dedicated to the doge Leonardo Loredano, the author, Francesco Negri, speaking of the things which contribute to the glory of a good government, says, "that the Venetian senate, in addition to all the other gifts of fortune, has the happiness to possess two brothers the ministers of nature, both equally admirable, one in theory, the other in practice, who have not only decorated the Ducal palace, but have filled, so to speak, the city itself with their magnificent productions."[3]

The distinction which Negri makes between the two

[1] These drawings are now at Paris. A series of eighteen prints have been engraved from them.

[2] The following epigram was composed on this Venus by a certain Zovenzonio:—

Qui Paphiam nudis Venerem videsse papillis
Optat in antiquo marmore Praxitelis,
Bellini pluteum Gentilis quærat, ubi stanis
Trunca licet, membris vibit imago suis.

[3] Morelli, *Notizia, etc.* p. 99.

brothers leads us to suspect that their ideas on art were not precisely the same, and this suspicion almost approaches certainty when we call to mind that after having worked for some time together they mutually agreed to separate in order that each might follow the path he judged the best. After what we have just related, it is easy to guess the causes of this separation. Giovanni Bellini, with his profoundly mystical tendencies, took from the first the most elevated view of the subject; but Gentile, although he sometimes yielded to the fraternal influence, always retained a secret inclination for the traditions of the school of Mantegna, which he believed it possible to combine with the transcendental aim of Christian art. Lineal perspective and the study of the antique always had charms for him, but this did not prevent his seeking food for his heart and imagination at a higher source, and drawing inspiration when the occasion required it from the grand recollections and consoling promises of Christianity. His enthusiasm for "the blind old Dandolo, the octogenarian doge," who played so important a part in the crusade of the Latins against the Greek empire; the zeal with which he copied the portrait of this Venetian hero from the very ancient original which was falling to pieces;[1] the courage he evinced in presenting Sultan Mahmoud, in his own palace, with the picture of St. John the Baptist, who was beheaded by the order of a despot;[2] and, above all, the pious inscriptions which we

[1] This portrait of Dandolo by Gentile Bellini is no longer at Venice. I hear that it is now in England.

[2] The Sultan having requested the republic to send him a painter, Gentile was dispatched to Constantinople in 1479.

read on some of his pictures,—all reveal a mind accessible to every sentiment that can exalt and honour the Christian artist.

On his return from Constantinople he was appointed to be the coadjutor of his brother Giovanni, who had been charged to execute an immense work in the Ducal palace. This was to paint, in a series of fourteen compartments, a sort of national epic, the subject being the glorious intervention of the Venetians in the quarrel of Pope Alexander III. with the Emperor Frederick—an intervention which resulted in the pacification of Italy and the triumph of the spiritual authority, celebrated amid the acclamations of the people in the basilica of St. Mark. On this grand historical basis a magnificent poem had been constructed, in the course of the two preceding centuries, by the popular imagination, every episode of which was at length believed to be authentic; it had subsequently passed from the legendary form in which it was preserved by the people into the more elevated form of an epic, written in almost unintelligible Latin verse;[1] and, finally, it assumed on several occasions that of art, the most congenial of any to the national taste. It is under this last form that we still find it represented in the great council chamber, by artists of a later period, who were commissioned to repair the injuries caused by the great fire of 1577.

The two brothers divided between them the fourteen compartments of this patriotic composition. The subject

[1] This epic poem, in barbarous Latin, was composed by a certain Castello di Bassano.

of the first was the Doge Ziani alighting from the Bucentaur to bear the homage of the republic to Pope Alexander III., who had just been recognised under the disguise of a monk in the convent *della Carità*. This first compartment was painted by Giovanni Bellini, but the five following by Gentile. They represented the Pope presenting the candle to the Doge; the departure of the Venetian ambassadors to treat for peace with Frederick II.; their arrival in the presence of the Emperor; the Pope exhorting the Doge and the Venetians to embark on board the fleet; next, the Pope accompanying the Doge at his departure, and giving him the benediction as a pledge of certain success. Then came the masterpiece of Giovanni Bellini, the naval battle between the Doge and Prince Otho, as much a monument of patience as of genius, to the completion of which the artist consecrated without regret the best years of his life; while he left to his brother, as the subject of his last picture, the return of the victorious Doge, to whom the Pontiff presented the ring as an emblem of the sovereignty which the republic was destined to possess over the sea.[1]

Although we have lost this great work, which has been completely destroyed, that executed by Gentile for

[1] There is not the least foundation for all that has been related of the insolence of the Pope in placing his foot on the Emperor's neck; and the account of the great naval battle, the captivity of Prince Otho, &c., are equally fabulous. Daru has shown himself defective incritical acumen in his relation of these events, which are presented in their true light and reduced to their just insignificance by Raumer, in his excellent work on the *Hohenstanfen*, book iv. ch. vii.

the confraternity of St. Mark[1] still remains to us, as also the three magnificent compositions which he painted for the confraternity of St. John the Evangelist,[2] and in each of which is represented a miracle worked by a fragment of the true cross in the possession of the brotherhood. In the first, a young man of Brescia, dangerously wounded in the head, is miraculously cured in consequence of a vow made by his father when this relic was carried in procession, and as a proof that the disposition of his heart was in perfect harmony with the occupation of his pencil, the artist has inscribed the following touching words beneath:—

Gentilis Bellinus amore incensus crucis, 1466.

The next miracle which he represented was the recovery of this very relic from the canal, into which it had fallen on the day that it was carried in procession to the church of S. Lorenzo, by the intervention of the pious Andrea Vendramini after its rescue had been vainly attempted by the profane. In representing this beautiful legend, the heart of the painter was even more powerfully affected than by the former work, and in order to express his increasing devotion for the holy sign of the Redemption, he inscribed underneath these still more forcible words:—

Gentilis Bellinus pio sanctissima crucis affectu lubens fecit 1500.

The third picture was worthy to be the companion of the two others. The subject he had to represent was the

[1] This curious picture is in the Brera. The women who listen to the preaching of St. Mark are in the Turkish costume, and the church of St. Euphemia, on the public place at Alexandria, is no other than St. Mark's at Venice.

[2] These three pictures are in the academy at Venice.

miraculous cure of a member of the confraternity from a quaternian fever, who is contemplating the instrument of his recovery with ecstatic admiration. This gave the aged Bellini another opportunity of displaying his pious imagination; and it was perhaps his last work, for he died a few years after its completion, and we may be permitted to suppose that he often dwelt on the consoling thought that it embodies, and looked himself to the Cross for the cure of all his infirmities.

Giovanni Bellini, his brother, also executed one or two great cyclical compositions of the same kind; but it is easy to perceive that it was not these which possessed the greatest charms for him. His more mystical and exalted imagination was better adapted to the purely devotional pictures, then so much in request among the patrician families for the decoration of their palaces, or of the churches placed under their protection.

Perhaps no artist ever made such surprising and continued progress, from the commencement to the close of his career, as Giovanni Bellini; and when we compare his first works with those which he executed at the age of seventy or even eighty, the contrast is so great that we should imagine them to belong to different centuries, and that an interval of several generations must have elapsed between them.

The pictures in his first manner, those which were produced in the effervescence of youth and in the more unremitting activity of his riper years, are much more numerous than the others, and are consequently to be found in all important galleries. Those executed in the first twenty years closely resemble each other in their

mechanical execution. But in his later pictures we find him endeavouring to darken and strengthen the tone of his colours, even before he had learnt the secret of oil-painting. As to his fundamental types of Christ, the Virgin, and the Apostles, they were irrevocably fixed in his imagination, their distinguishing character being a melancholy gravity. His pencil was also never employed upon scenes which, however graceful in themselves, might have a tendency to degrade the subject; no effusions of maternal tenderness, no exchange of infantine caresses between the little St. John and the infant Christ, are to be found in his pictures. The latter is generally represented by him with the hand raised to give his benediction, and the expression of the face is in harmony with the attitude; as for the Virgin, we see that she is entirely absorbed with the presentiment of her sufferings, and is already "The Mother of the Seven Sorrows." The type has not the same beauty as that of the Umbrian school, but it is more prophetic, and if we examine the series of Bellini's productions we shall find this type constantly adhered to by the artist, and that, although he may sometimes have changed the colour of the drapery, there is little variation in the general treatment of the subject.

Without enumerating all the works of his first manner, I shall content myself with noticing those which are best known, and especially the two compartments which he painted for the confraternity of S. Girolamo; one of them represented the saint preaching to his companions in the desert, and the other (several times repeated by the artist) represented him seated in his cell, deeply absorbed in study. This work was terminated in 1464, and was fol-

lowed by a great number of devotional pictures particularly in request among the members of the Cornaro family, who delighted to decorate their palace with the productions of Bellini's pencil, and valued them more highly than any other of the patrician families.

In 1472 he was commissioned to paint a dead Christ for one of the rooms in the Ducal palace, supported by the Virgin on one side and St. John on the other. This pathetic composition, so admirable in expression, betrays a certain timidity of style, from which Giovanni Bellini was not destined entirely to emancipate himself until a very advanced age, and after having passed long years in tracing on the walls of the great council chamber the seven principal divisions of the grand national epic we have already alluded to. Next to the picture of the great naval battle, Bellini has represented Prince Otho, over whom it was gained, persuading his father to reconcile himself with the supreme pontiff; afterwards the Pope is seen disembarking with the Doge at the port of Ancona, and granting the privilege of the *Umberella* to him and his successors; next their triumphal entry into Rome; then the festival celebrated in memory of this great event; while in the last compartment the Pope and Emperor are introduced, with the Doge playing the part of mediator between the temporal and spiritual authority. It was this consummation above all, so truly grandiose and imposing, even when viewed in its pure historical simplicity, which flattered the national pride of the Venetians; and so much did they cherish the recollection of it, that, after the fire of 1577 had destroyed the paintings of the two Bellini, together with those of Titian,

they commissioned other artists to reproduce these scenes in their former order and compartments.

Notwithstanding the destruction of this great patriotic monument, some idea of the style in which it was executed may be formed by examining the contemporaneous productions of the artist,—that, for example, which decorates the first chapel to the right in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, the grandiose design of which announces a much greater boldness of pencil; and although this picture is painted in distemper, we find an unusual effort on the part of its author to give greater depth and richness to the tone of his colours. The secret of oil-painting, revealed to him about this time by Antonella da Messina, enabled him to give greater vigour to his tints and more relief to his forms, by the charm of chiaroscuro, which he had hitherto neglected. Antonello had himself learnt this secret from John of Bruges, and had made an astonishing application of it in his picture of St. Cassian, an object of universal admiration, in which the painter was said to have combined every excellence but expression, which it was not in his power to give.[1] Fifteen years later, in 1490, we find Antonello still painting at Treviso; and this long residence explains the rapidity with which the new method was adopted by the Venetian school, for it was universally practised there before the end of the century, while it was hardly known in the other parts of Italy.

One of the most ardent and successful followers of the new method was Giovanni Bellini, to whom this discovery seemed to open a new career. Indeed, it is

[1] Sabellico, *De situ urbis*, p. 85.

only from this time that he began to produce what may be called his chefs-d'œuvre,—for we can give no other title to the pictures he executed in 1488, to the astonishment of his fellow-citizens, who could hardly believe an artist already past seventy capable of producing such marvels.[1] We can easily conceive their wonder at so rare a phenomenon, when we stand before the picture in the church of the Frari, or that in S. Pietro at Murano. In the first, the figure of the Virgin, and those of the saints by whom she is surrounded, have all the imposing gravity of a religious composition, while the angels equal the most charming miniatures for freshness of colouring and *naïveté* of expression: it is a work which may boldly take its place beside the finest mystical productions of the Umbrian school. It seems as if a foretaste of celestial beatitude had beamed on the soul of the aged painter while occupied with this work; he has thrown aside that veil of melancholy in which he loved to wrap the countenance of the Virgin; it is no longer the Mother of the Seven Sorrows whom he has painted, but rather the source of his joy—*causa nostra lætitiæ*—to whom he has addressed this short prayer,—

Janua certa poli, duc mentem, dirige vitam,
Quæ peragem commissa tuæ sint omnia curæ.

The picture at Murano, although it bears the same date as the preceding, is superior to it in certain respects, and particularly in the character of the design; but the most remarkable feature in it is the Doge in his ducal crown, humbly kneeling before the infant Christ. It is

[1] Giovanni Bellini was born in 1426.

the first time this pious representation, so often reproduced in the doge's palace, and in pictures belonging to private individuals, occurs in the Venetian school; and if some rare and isolated examples of it may be found elsewhere, it is at Venice alone that this usage has been transformed into an act of national humility, and a testimony of public gratitude for successes obtained on land and sea; for deliverance from a plague;—in a word, for all that was regarded as the result of a special intervention of Divine Providence.[1]

We must not omit to mention another picture, probably executed about the same period—that, in the sacristy of the *Redentore,* in which the Virgin is represented with the infant Jesus asleep on her knees. This delicious picture, in which the charm of colouring is united to the greatest purity of expression, leaves the most *exigeante* imagination nothing more to desire; and criticism is not only disarmed, but even refuses to analyse an order of beauty which is beyond the domain of taste, and belongs to a far more elevated sphere.

In 1494 he produced the Madonna of the church of S. Giobbo, and the apparition of this picture, now in the Academy, must have been considered a great event at Venice, since Sabellico makes honourable mention of it in the small work he published in the same year on a subject which did not relate to the history of contemporary art. It must, however, be admitted, that this production of Bellini's is very inferior to the three others, although we do not mean to imply that his decline com-

[1] For further remarks on this interesting subject see Ruskin's *Modern Painters,* vol. ii. p. 116.—*Translator's note.*

menced from this time; his imagination, on the contrary, seconded by a firm and docile hand, was as vigorous and poetical as ever, when he painted the Baptism of Christ in 1501 for the church of Santa-Corona at Vicenza, as also when he executed, four years later—that is to say, at the age of eighty—the magnificent picture which forms the principal decoration of the fine church of S. Zacharia, and which is not only admirable for vigour of tone, progress in chiaroscuro, and perfection of design, but is a chef-d'œuvre of the Venetian school in all that regards poetry and depth of expression. It is impossible to conceive anything more grandiose than the figures of St. Peter and St. Jerome; their attitude and expression breathe dignity and holiness: while in the figures of St. Catharine and St. Agatha the expression is heightened in intensity by that beauty of profile and proportion, that touching grace and simplicity, which exclusively belong to the productions of this period, the golden age of Christian painting.[1]

The following year (1506) was marked by an important event in the life of Giovanni Bellini. An Ultramontane artist, of great renown in his own country, came to Venice, which he had visited for the first time eleven years before, and painted a picture for the church of St. Bartolomeo,[2] which made a great sensation, and gave rise to a curious and animated controversy among the Venetian painters. This stranger, who so boldly

[1] This picture was carried to Paris, where it was transferred to canvas, and sent back to Venice in 1815. It has evidently suffered from those vicissitudes.

[2] Sansovino, *Descrizione di Venezia*, p. 48.

planted his banner in the midst of the Venetian school, was the celebrated Albert Durer, who found at first but little sympathy there, in consequence of his reputation as an engraver, a branch of art for which the Venetians professed so little esteem that it almost amounted to indifference. When he had convinced his adversaries that he was as great in colouring as in design, they changed their point of attack, and reproached him with not conforming himself sufficiently to the rules of classical taste in his compositions. This accusation, however, fell to the ground, in consequence of the approbation and encouragement of Giovanni Bellini, who not only insisted on possessing some work of Albert Durer's, at whatever price he chose to demand, but also brought him into repute among the patrician families, by speaking in high terms of his character and productions. The recollection of this generous patronage was cherished by the artist who was the object of it, who has expressed the gratitude he felt in a letter written about this time to his friend Pirkheimer at Nuremberg.[1]

The transient influence exercised by the Ultramontane artist over the style of Giovanni Bellini is slightly perceptible in the picture which he painted in 1507 for the church of S. Francesco della Vigna; there is a greater harshness in the contours, and even in the countenance of the Virgin, which is far from possessing the suavity of the Madonna in the sacristy of the Redentore. This inferiority may possibly be the first tribute paid to declining age by one who was singularly exempt from

[1] Morelli, *Notizia di Opere di disegno*, etc. note cxxxvii. p. 223, 224.

the decrepitude and impotence which usually accompany it.

It is probable that, feeling himself no longer to possess that freshness of imagination, without which he could not be successful in the representation of Madonnas, he entirely renounced compositions of this kind, for I do not think he painted a single Virgin during the ten last years of his life.[1] But in the wide domain of art he had little difficulty in finding subjects better fitted to his declining faculties. He was almost ninety when he undertook to paint St. Jerome in the Desert for the church of S. Giovanni-Chrysogono, an admirable subject for the patriarch of Venetian painting, who felt himself approaching the end of his long career, and who from this time borrowed his inspirations exclusively from subjects connected with this important and engrossing thought.

Bellini in this subject has not followed the traditions of the schools: St. Jerome is seated alone on a rock, in the midst of a severe and unvaried landscape; his book rests on an angle formed by the knotted trunk of an old tree, and while he appears absorbed in its perusal his countenance breathes the most profound calm, in perfect harmony with the aspect of this vast solitude. It is incontestably the artist's most touching work, who seems to have registered on the canvas the secret aspirations of his soul after that ineffable repose, the image of which he has so poetically represented. Certain mysterious allusions are often to be found in the last works of Christian artists, which are only divined or even sus-

[1] Giovanni Bellini died in 1517.

pected by those who have inherited their doctrines as much in matters of faith as in art. To others who have taken a different view of the subject they are an almost hopeless enigma, and they recognise no higher merit in these works than a more or less skilful distribution of lines and colours.

The number of portraits which Giovanni Bellini painted was immense; the most interesting of these were to be found in the great frescos of the Ducal palace, and perished in the fire of 1577; but enough remain to give an idea of the genius he displayed in this secondary branch of art. The portrait of the Doge in the picture at S. Pietro at Murano, that of Leonardo Loredano in the Berlin gallery,[1] the small picture in the Louvre containing the portraits of himself and his brother Giacomo, and several other works of the same kind dispersed in the various galleries of Europe, are treated with a vigour and precision of character which Titian himself has rarely surpassed. But the masterpiece of Giovanni Bellini must have been the portrait of Cassandra Fidele, which is only known to us through the medium of an indifferent engraving. This young girl, so full of enthusiasm, learning, and piety, devoted almost from childhood to studies of the most abstract kind, without her natural grace and *naïveté* being in the slightest degree impaired, was an object of admiration to the whole of Italy, and almost of worship to the Vene-

[1] The order in which the pictures composing the Museum of Berlin are arranged is a real service to the friends of art, who may there study the history of painting in its historical development; and this study is still more facilitated by Dr. Waagen's excellent catalogue, a chef-d'œuvre of its kind.

tians, whom she astonished by her theological and classical erudition, and enchanted by the charm and fervour of her poetical and musical improvisations. She was never seen to wear ornaments of gold, or jewels, but appeared in public veiled and dressed in white, and thus seemed invested with a kind of mysterious prestige which made her still more captivating. She was regarded as a kind of national muse by the Venetians; and when Isabella of Aragon tried to attract her to Naples by the most splendid offers, the Venetian senate passed a decree to forbid her departure, *in order that the republic might not be deprived of one of its greatest ornaments.*

Such was the heroine whose features Giovanni Bellini was commissioned to portray at the age of sixteen,—that is to say, when her countenance, although still retaining its childish expression, was marked with a vague inspiration, which it required a pencil of the greatest delicacy and *naïveté* to seize.

Giovanni Bellini's journey to Ferrara towards the close of his life, on the invitation of the duke, who wished him to paint a bacchanalian scene in his palace,[1] would be a very insignificant event in the life of this Christian artist, if the intimacy he then formed with Ariosto and Dosso Dossi had not caused his name to be associated by the first with that of Mantegna and Leonardo da Vinci, in his immortal poem,[2] and given the second an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with the magic of Venetian colouring, into which he was

[1] See D'Agincourt, pl. 143.

[2] "E quei che fura a nostri die e son ora
Leonardo, Mantegna, e Gian Bellini."
Orlando Furioso, canto 30.

afterwards more completely initiated by Titian himself.[1] When we consider the enthusiasm which the revival of classical literature excited throughout the whole of Italy, we are astonished not to find a single pagan or mythological subject among the pictures executed by Giovanni Bellini for the Venetian patricians. And so striking a difference between this school and that of Florence at the commencement of the sixteenth century can only be explained by the more profoundly Christian spirit, which animated not only the painters but their patrons,—for it must not be supposed that Giovanni Bellini was required to stand forth as the champion of Christian art against the invading torrent of paganism; far from being the sole representative of those traditions which began elsewhere to be considered obsolete, he was supported, not only in Venice itself, but in the towns belonging to the republic, by artists almost as happily inspired as himself, who formed a sort of constellation of which he was the nucleus.

The artist who ranks next to Giovanni Bellini, and is, in fact, almost on an equality with him, is Cima da Conegliano, so called from the name of his native hill, which he has delighted to introduce in the background of almost all his pictures, even when the scene is at Bethlehem or on Calvary. His career as an artist, which does not appear to have been very long, is comprised between the years 1493, the date of the dilapidated picture on the high altar of the church of Conegliano, and 1517, after which nothing more is known of

[1] The date of Giovanni Bellini's death may be found in the manuscript journal of Marino Sarnuto, as having taken place on Nov. 29, 1516.

him.[1] He first found employment for his pencil in his native town and in the surrounding villages, where his works are still held in peculiar veneration by the inhabitants; and he no doubt owed the exquisite taste he displayed in the choice and variety of his landscapes to the beauty of the scenes amid which his youth was passed. The colouring is at once so fresh and vigorous, the water so transparent, the birds and trees treated with such evident predilection, and the whole displays such a genuine feeling for the picturesque, that, independently of the excellence of his design and the deeply religious character of his compositions, his merit as a landscape painter would alone secure him a distinguished place in the history of art.

Cima's early pictures bear a great resemblance to those of the first manner of Giovanni Bellini, and are also for the most part painted in distemper; they are, consequently, very inferior to those which he executed later, after the discovery of oil-painting had opened a new field to a great colourist like himself. It is not easy to discover the order in which the chefs-d'œuvre with which he decorated several of the churches in Venice succeeded one another, the greater number of them being without a date; but in the absence of a chronological order we may somewhat approximate to it by following the progress of his genius, as it developes itself in his various productions.

The most graceful of his pictures is in the little church of the Badia, and represents the youthful Tobit conducted by the angel Raphael; a favourite subject with

[1] Ridolfi contents himself with saying that he died *in virili etâ*.

many subsequent painters, but one in which they have rarely been successful, from its requiring a charm and simplicity of pencil seldom found united to the skilful design and grandeur of form which distinguish a later period. Indeed the biblical and patriarchal style may be said to have prevailed for a very short time in the history of art.

The Madonna in the Academy, seated on a throne and surrounded by saints, much resembles in its character and type the Madonnas of Giovanni Bellini, without, however, bearing that impress of profound melancholy, or that mysterious and indefinable expression, which seems to reveal the presentiment of future suffering. But, unlike Giovanni Bellini, Cima da Conegliano does not appear to have chosen the Virgin and Child for his favourite subject; grace was not the prevailing quality of his pencil, and this is probably the reason why female figures are so rarely introduced in his pictures, even when the traditions of his school seem to render their presence necessary. But what severe beauty and intensity of expression do we find in his types of Christ, of the prophets, apostles, evangelists, and doctors of the church! The same grave and solemn air is impressed on all these figures, and we discover at the first glance that the whole is in close relation with the touching mystery of the Redemption. Not a smile appears upon the countenance of any of his personages, with the exception, perhaps, of his angels, whose faces are sometimes lighted up with a faint expression of beatitude.

The best proof that one particular type of Christ had taken firm hold of his imagination is the perfect identity

of this type in the three pictures in which he has had occasion to introduce it; the first is in the parish church of the village of Portogruaro, and represents the Saviour reproaching St. Thomas for his incredulity in the presence of the other apostles. This group, which presents almost insurmountable difficulties to the painter on account of the individuality of character and the hierarchical differences it was necessary to observe, was peculiarly adapted to the genius of Cima da Conegliano; and we never grow weary of admiring this magnificent composition, both in its details and as a whole. The same motive simplified,—that is to say, the same scene between Jesus Christ and St. Thomas, without any of the other disciples being present, is repeated in a picture now in the Academia delle belle Arti; while in that representing the baptism of Christ on the high altar in San Giovanni in Bragora, the type of the Redeemer is precisely the same as in the two former. But it is not with this resemblance that the spectator is struck the first time he sees this work, equally bold in its dimensions and in its conception. The unusual grandeur and variety of the landscape, the association of living and inanimate nature to the joys of heaven and earth, the harmony diffused over every part of the picture, the admirable manner in which the imposing figures of the Son of God and of the Baptist are characterised, produce too lively an impression on the imagination for us to criticise and compare the respective types.

The type of St. John the Baptist was, perhaps, the best adapted to the genius of the artist, who has not only surpassed himself in it, but in the conception of the

character has left the greatest painters of the age—Titian and Raphael included—far behind him. Cima's superiority in this instance must be admitted by all who have seen his chef-d'œuvre in the church of la Madonna dell' Orto, in which the spare form of the Baptist is represented clothed in a garment of camel's hair, his visage pale and hollow, and his eyes ecstatically raised towards heaven; he is mounted on a sort of pedestal, around which are ranged St. Mark, St. Jerome, St. Peter, with his inspired look, St. Paul, grasping with an air of authority the sword of the word: the whole forming a group which will bear comparison with the most perfect productions of Christian art in Venice.

It is impossible to pass over in silence a composition of an entirely opposite character, also executed by Cima for the church of la Madonna del Carmine. It represents the Virgin in adoration before the infant Jesus, in the midst of a delicious landscape. The subject is evidently borrowed from the Umbrian school; and it is the more interesting to discover this sympathy, because the total absence of pagan or mythological subjects in the works of Cima affords the strongest confirmation of it.

The same exclusively religious character may be remarked in Basaïti, another painter of this school, who resembles Cima da Conegliano in many respects, although he differs from him in the general tone of his compositions, which rather incline to softness and grace, whilst those of Cima are characterised by a majestic severity. Basaïti is particularly distinguished by the harmony and suavity of his colouring, by his knowledge of chiaroscuro, in which he is superior to most of his contemporaries,

and by the expression of angelic beatitude and calm melancholy which he gives to his personages; but he is very inferior to Cima, and even to Giovanni Bellini, in the arrangement of his landscapes, which are almost always mannered, and devoid of the charms of perspective. The same inferiority may be remarked in the choice of the costume and the dispositions of the draperies, which are sometimes stiff and scanty, at others voluminous and heavy; but these purely external defects are fully compensated by the deep religious feeling which breathes in all his compositions.

Two of his works are preserved in the church of S. Pietro in Castello, and in these, notwithstanding their injured condition, the *suave* and harmonious touch of the artist may still be recognised. They are in one of the side-chapels to the right, and represent St. Peter on a throne and St. George on horseback, with a landscape background, to which Basaïti has endeavoured to impart a smiling and graceful character.

All his other works having been executed for churches which were either suppressed or destroyed after the overthrow of the republic by foreign invaders, such as escaped that great dilapidation must be sought in the Academia delle belle Arti. There, have fortunately been preserved, first, the Calling of Andrew and Peter, regarded, both by Ridolfi and Lanzi, as Basaïti's masterpiece. In this picture the *naïve* simplicity of the attitudes, the expression of humility in the countenances of the two brothers, and their strictly apostolical character, cannot fail to excite our admiration. Secondly, Christ praying on the Mount of Olives: the arrangement of this

subject, being already fixed by tradition, did not exhaust the imagination of the painter, but left him free to concentrate all his powers on the principal figure, which is, in fact, much more happily treated than in the calling of the two apostles. Thirdly, five or six single figures of small dimensions, as remarkable for design as for vigour of execution: among them we must more particularly distinguish a St. John, a St. Anthony the hermit, and a dead Christ, surpassing them all, with two angels sorrowfully contemplating the wounds in his hands and feet. The history of art offers few compositions more exquisite and pathetic, and it is incontestably the most perfect of all those attributed to Basaïti, not only in expression and poetry, but in design, perspective, and colour.

Like Basaïti, Vittore Carpaccio succeeded best in works of small or moderate dimensions, and particularly those in which an historical or legendary cycle is represented, and which may be said to occupy the same rank in painting as the epic in poetry.

A mysterious instinct seems to have impelled each artist in the direction best suited to his genius: it was Giovanni Bellini who furnished the principal churches and pious patrician families with images of the Virgin and the infant Christ; while the pencil of Cima da Conegliano found more congenial employment in the severe types of the New Testament; and Carpaccio, too timid to venture upon this mystical ground, placed himself immediately below them, in the attractive region of legend and history, which he turned to greater account than any other painter of the Venetian school.

As a colourist he was very inferior to most of his con-

temporaries, but he has atoned for this defect by the correctness of his design, his knowledge of lineal perspective, and a fertility of imagination of which there are few examples in the history of art: we may, indeed, compare several of his compositions to epic poems in arrangement and extent; and yet we are far from possessing all that were executed by him. That which he painted for the confraternity of St. Stephen, and in which the history of the first martyr was represented at great length, has been dispersed among purchasers of different nations, and one of its finest fragments is now in the Louvre. His representation of the martyrdom of the Christian soldiers who composed the Theban legion has shared the same fate, and the national episode which he painted in the Ducal palace was destroyed in the fatal conflagration of 1577, by which so many masterpieces were consumed.

The first subject in which the poetical imagination of Carpaccio found employment was the magnificent legend of St. Ursula, which he represented in a series of eight large pictures for the confraternity of that name. This colossal monument of Christian art now forms part of the collection of the Academy, and we may congratulate ourselves that it has escaped the shipwreck in which so many other masterpieces have perished; but from the limited dimensions of the gallery the different parts of this Christian poem no longer succeed one another in regular order, and therefore the same deep impression is not produced which in its former locality it never failed to make, even on the minds of those least capable of appreciating a work of art. The most judi-

cious writer on Venetian painting, Zanetti, relates that he often placed himself in a corner of the chapel which contained it, in order to observe the people who came there to perform their devotions, and that, after a short prayer, and even sometimes before it was ended, they remained lost in admiration and ecstasy, expressing by their looks and gestures the secret emotions of their souls.[1] Even Zanetti himself was sometimes carried away by it, especially when he fixed his eyes on the picture which represents St. Ursula reposing on her virginal couch, adorned with all the graces which sleep gives to innocence, and announcing by the expression of her countenance that visions of Paradise formed the subject of her dreams.[2]

The most admired of these pictures is the Inauguration of St. Ursula, who is placed on a kind of throne, or pedestal, formed by the palms of her companions, virgins and martyrs like herself, and around which they are ranged in joyous and graceful groups. The idea of thus closing the legend, and crowning it with this beautiful and mystical composition, was certainly

[1] "Uno dei Maggiore pregj di esse opere credo che consista negli effetti e in quelli singolarmente che fanno sul senso e sul cuore delle genti lontane dalle cognizioni dell' arte. Io mi sto in questa cappella inosservato alcuna volta e veggo contrare alcune buone persone che dopo una breve orazione anzi spesso nell orazione medesima rivolgendo gli occhi a queste pitture, restano sospese il volto a la mente, e non possono nascondere l' interno movimento che provano."—See Zanetti, article *Carpaccio*.

[2] "Io non lascio quantunque volte qui mi ritrovo di ammirare la santa che dorme nel virginale suo letto con grazia pura tanto e innocente representata; che mostra all aria del volto di videre in sogno imagini veramente di paradiso."—Zanetti, *ibid.*

very happy; but to have executed it worthily in its most important part, namely, in that which concerns the transfiguration of the saint, he must have borrowed the pencil of the Umbrian artists, or have sought at least, in analogous inspirations, the means of surmounting this great difficulty in art.[1]

This immense work occupied Carpaccio from 1493 to 1495, and was quickly succeeded by another of the same kind, executed for the confraternity of St. Stephen; and his reputation as a historical and legendary painter now daily increasing, he was commissioned in 1502 to represent the histories of St. Jerome and St. George for another confraternity, where they may still be seen, as the locality has not changed its original destination.

The history of St. Jerome, which became popular in Christian art at a very early period, has furnished the painter with the subject of three compositions, in the leading features of which the traditional arrangement has been strictly adhered to; but many of the details are entirely original, particularly in the last, in which old men are represented kneeling around the body of the saint, who has just expired, and whose countenance still retains its last serene expression of hope.

The chivalrous legend of St. George was no doubt more congenial to the imagination of the painter, and has been treated by him with greater predilection. In the first compartment he has represented his hero attacking the dragon which infested the town of Beretas;

[1] Another picture by him in the Manfrini palace, which represents in much smaller dimensions St. Ursula taking leave of her father, seems to indicate that the artist represented this subject more than once.

in the second he is seen dragging after him the bleeding trophy of his victory, while the king and his daughter, accompanied by a numerous suite, advance to meet him. In this second picture St. George is still represented with the air of Christian humility which distinguishes him in the first. In the third the young virgin becomes the principal personage; she comes with her father and family to receive the rite of baptism, and it is St. George, her liberator, who administers it to her. And here the artist has displayed an exquisite delicacy of imagination, by representing her as more beautiful in this last scene than in the two former; her light hair, instead of being bound round her head, falls in long tresses on her shoulders, while from her whole demeanour we perceive that she is about to become a Christian.

The legend of the ten thousand martyrs which has passed from the church of St. Anthony, long since destroyed, into the academy, might have furnished the painter with a variety of poetical and picturesque incidents, if the whole of it had not been concentrated within the narrow limits of a single picture of small dimensions, in which the spectator is fatigued by the multiplicity of the objects and forms that abound in it.

In the last ten years of Carpaccio's career as an artist, we do not find a single work of any extent among those attributed to him; but it certainly was not from a consciousness of any decline in his powers that he gave up painting historical or legendary compositions. The picture of the Presentation of Christ, in which angels are seen accompanying the song of the aged Simeon;[1]

[1] This picture was painted in 1510.

that in which the Virgin is represented, while yet a child, ascending alone the steps of the temple,[1] a charming motive borrowed afterwards by Titian; that which decorates the high altar in the church of St. Vitale, and in which are three figures alike magnificent in pose and character, and also indicating an evident progress in aërial perspective,—all these monuments of his riper years, compared with the productions of his youth, sufficiently prove that his genius never declined; while the eminently patriarchal composition which terminates the series of his works, and represents a scene of great *naïveté* and tenderness drawn from the legend of St. Joachim and St. Anna, and in which (for what reason we know not), St. Louis and St. Ursula assist, is certainly very superior to any of his former compositions for boldness of style and quality of colouring.[2] The historian Ridolfi, who no doubt has transmitted to us the popular tradition, has given utterance to Carpaccio's apotheosis in these brief words—"Whilst his fellow-citizens were mourning his death, he was admitted into the blessed mansions of heaven."[3]

Although the three artists of whom we have just spoken, namely, Cima da Conegliano, Basaïti, and Carpaccio, all belong to the religious school, of which Giovanni Bellini is usually considered the head, they cannot, strictly speaking, be called his disciples; all that can be affirmed is, that they worked with the same aim, on the same subjects, and with the same exclusive inspirations,

[1] Now in the gallery of Milan.

[2] This picture is in the Academia delle belle Arti at Venice.

[3] *Pianto dai cittadini, sorrisa nelle beate stanze del cielo.*

at a time when they were already encompassed on every side by paganism.

Indeed the traditions of Christian art must have taken very deep root in Venice, and in the secondary schools of her territory, since they were maintained by the succeeding generation until about the middle of the sixteenth century with the same courage, and almost with the same success.[1]

Even before the death of Giovanni Bellini his disciples began to form themselves into two distinct schools: some, following the example of Gorgione (no less bold and impetuous a reformer than his contemporary Luther), strove after an external development; the others, more enamoured with the poetry of art, continued, after the example of their master, to develope its more mystical element, and were amply compensated by popular suffrage for the contemptuous pity with which they were regarded by the innovators.

Mansueti was educated, according to some writers, in the school of Gentile Bellini; according to others, in that of Carpaccio. This question has been settled by the artist himself, who, in a picture which he painted for a convent in the island of Mazorbo,[1] entitles himself the pupil of Giovanni Bellini. In this picture, the finish of the architectural details and draperies cannot fail to be admired; but the greater number of the types are vulgar; the design is stiff and timid; and, if we were asked

[1] This picture is now at Venice, in the possession of Il Professore Santi.

to conjecture the date of the work, we might, without fear of offending probability, venture to place it in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

He was, notwithstanding, charged with important works by his contemporaries, for we find him invited to Treviso to paint an altar picture in the church of the Franciscans;[1] and he must have enjoyed considerable popularity in Venice itself, since he worked successively for two confraternities,—the highest honour to which a Venetian artist could aspire, after that of painting in the Ducal palace. He had also the glory of being, in both cases, the continuator of Gentile Bellini. For the confraternity of St. Mark he painted several of the miracles performed by the saint; amongst others, the Cure of St. Anianus and his Conversion, in two distinct pictures, one of which is now in the Milan gallery; the other, preserved in the Venetian academy, is particularly remarkable for the minute exactness of the architectural ornaments. In the same locality is a beautiful fragment of the composition executed by Mansueti for the confraternity of St. John the Evangelist, and in this we may see with what scrupulous fidelity he followed in the steps of Gentile Bellini,[2] whose work he was charged to complete.

We must assign a much higher place to his fellow-

[1] This picture may be seen in the Venetian academy.

[2] This picture, executed in the style of Gentile Bellini, represents an incident in a funeral procession, in which the bearer of the miraculous cross is suddenly arrested by some invisible obstacle as he is about to cross the bridge of St. Leo, the deceased having refused to carry it himself at the interment of one of the brotherhood. Mansueti died in 1528.

disciple, Vincenzio Catena, one of the greatest painters of the Venetian school, and distinguished for his meritorious fidelity to the ancient traditions; for it only depended on himself to be the rival of Giorgione in grace and beauty of form, and even in boldness and good taste in the choice of his compositions.[1] This he proved, not only in his picture of Judith holding the sword in one hand and the head of Holofernes in the other, but also in that formerly in the Palazzo Pesaro, and which, according to Zanetti, showed more clearly than any of his other works the progress he might have made in the new path opened by the great masters;[2] but his pious imagination was better adapted to the *naif* and simple style of the early Venetian school, and it was in this style that he conceived and executed the charming picture in the church of Santa Maria Mater Domini at Venice, and in which he has represented St. Christina kneeling on the borders of the lake of Bolsena, with angels supporting the millstone suspended round her neck. No subject could be better adapted to the kind of charm which this artist-poet knew how to throw over his compositions: indeed, it may be called his chef-d'œuvre, and that which most completely justifies the enthusiasm of the senator Marc-Antonio Michele, who entreats a certain Marsilio, to whom he wrote at Rome in 1521, with all the solicitude of patriotism and friendship, to watch over the life

[1] *Si vede che potè sequirge le belle e graziose forme di Tiziano e di Giorgione; che seppe imitare le piu libere e benè immaginate composizione*, etc.—Zanetti, article *Catena*.

[2] *Non v'e opera che come questa dimostra fin dove il Catena potesse quinque nelle vie dei nuovi maestri*.—Ibid.

of Catena; because death, he says, seems to delight in cutting off the greatest painters, having already thrown his dart at Raphael, and holding his scythe ready to strike Michael Angelo.[1]

Undoubtedly his life was not generally regarded by the Venetians as more important to art than that of Titian, who then held the sceptre of painting at Venice: but Michele's recommendation at least proves that the graceful pencil of Catena had also enthusiastic admirers. Besides, his being selected rather than any other artist to paint an altar picture in the chapel of the Ducal palace, where he represented the doge, Leonardo Loredano, kneeling before the holy Virgin, proves that his superiority was recognised in subjects of this kind, and that he was not without the glorious patronage of the republic. By an inconceivable fatality, nearly all his works have disappeared from the places they formerly adorned; a great number of the portraits which he executed in the style of his master, Giovanni Bellini, are dispersed, generally under other names, in foreign galleries; and the few works by him that remain in Venice, although excellent in quality, are scarcely of sufficient importance to justify us in assigning him the place he deserves among the great artists of the period. And, nevertheless, he took various precautions to secure for himself a place in the memory of his fellow-citizens; and in order to procure the benefit of their prayers for the relief of his soul, he left at his death, which took place in 1530, several legacies for pious institutions, for the dowry of a certain number of poor girls, and especially for the construction

[1] Morelli, *Notizia di Opere di disegno.*

of an edifice for the use of the national painters, under the patronage of St. Sophia.

After him two other artists, Francesco and Girolamo Santa Croce, still continued to follow the same traditions at Venice. The authentic career of the first commences in the year 1507, the date of the charming picture in the church of San Pietro at Murano, and in which he entitles himself the disciple of Giovanni Bellini, whose style, arrangement, and types he has, in fact, almost literally reproduced in the figure of the Virgin, and in those of St. Jerome and the prophet Jeremiah, who stand on each side the throne: the only striking difference is in the colouring, which is less vigorous in the scholar than in the master. This inferiority may be remarked in his later works; a pale blue almost always predominates, and although there is a certain harmony in the colours, the eye is not completely satisfied. There is also greater heaviness in his style, and something vulgar in his types, with the exception of the figure of Christ, which is not only dignified, but has also a certain tinge of soft melancholy, too rarely found in the productions of the Venetian school. All these observations apply to the picture of the Last Supper in the church of the Franciscans (San Francesco della Vigna), and, unfortunately, it is the only one to which we can apply them, at least in Venice, where the works of Francesco Santa Croce ought not to be so scarce, if it be true that he worked there until the year 1541.[1]

[1] All doubt on this point seems set at rest by a picture with his name bearing this date; and mentioned in *Lettere sulle belle arti Trevigiane*, by Crico, p. 169.

Girolamo Santa Croce, his relation, although in what degree is unknown, was certainly his disciple; but he far surpassed his master, and approached much nearer to the more popular manner of Giorgione and Titian, without our being able to say that he renounced the pure traditions of his school, of which he was, in fact, the last representative. This makes us the more regret the disappearance or dispersion of so many of his works, formerly to be seen at Venice. The ten pictures representing the life of St. Francis (a subject too rarely treated by the Venetian school) had already disappeared in the time of Zanetti; the Image of Christ, with a doge kneeling before it, no longer decorates the portico of SS. Giovanni e Paolo; the church of S. Geminiano, in which he had represented the Last Supper, and that of the SS. Trinità, for which he had painted an Adoration of the Magi and a Madonna between two Saints,[1] were suppressed at the end of the last century; and the church of the Franciscans, which could formerly boast of possessing the Martyrdom of St. Lawrence, and another composition of still larger dimensions, in which were five beautiful figures of saints, now only contains one work by the hand of this artist: it is the majestic figure of Christ, with the same expression of melancholy which distinguishes this type in the works of Francesco Santa Croce.

Three other churches possess remarkable productions by the pencil of Girolamo. In that of S. Sylvestro is his picture of St. Thomas of Canterbury. This very early

[1] These two pictures were to be found a few years ago in the Craglietta collection at Venice.

work[1] announces great freshness and purity of imagination, and fully justifies the praise Lanzi bestows upon him as a distinguished landscape painter. In the parish-church of Burano is a St. Mark by him, seated on a throne and surrounded by four saints, all as perfectly characterised as the principal figure. The style of this picture is more severe, and the date is eleven years later, which sufficiently explains this difference. The Last Supper in the church of S. Martino, although executed nearly thirty years after the picture in S. Sylvestro,[2] is, nevertheless, a work of great vigour and poetry, and Zanetti does not hesitate to say that it is in no respect inferior to the finest compositions of the period, and that in this work Girolamo Santa Croce rather appears to be the pupil of Titian or Giorgione than an artist born and educated in the old Venetian school.[3]

Let us now cast a rapid glance over the towns situated beyond the Lagunes, but subject to Venice, from Friouli to the Milanese frontier. In the whole extent of

[1] It bears the date of 1520.

[2] In 1549.

[3] In the collection of the Manfrini palace at Venice is another Adoration of the Magi, very superior to that formerly in the church of the Trinità. The landscape is particularly charming. The figure of the Virgin, the costume of the Magi, and several other details, slightly betray the influence of the German engravers, from whom he loved to borrow and vary this same subject of the Adoration, which he frequently repeated, and which was evidently his favourite theme. Another of his pictures, representing St. Lawrence and St. Stephen, is in the Milan gallery, and has been engraved. But the most remarkable of all his works, at least for the study of the nude and the knowledge of foreshortening—in a word, that which most nearly approaches a later style—is a Descent from the Cross at Bergamo, in which he has represented himself pointing to the holy cross, in allusion to his own name.

the country included between these two distant points Giovanni Bellini's influence was astonishing, notwithstanding the formidable rivalry of two powerful schools recently founded, the one at Padua by Mantegna, the other at Milan by Leonardo da Vinci. Even at Bergamo, which seemed naturally placed within the sphere of Leonardo's influence, the genius of Giovanni Bellini prevailed. This is proved, not only by historical testimony, but by the numerous works with which Cariano and Previtale adorned their native city.[1]

Cariano executed a great number of devotional pictures for his countrymen, and was never weary of repeating his favourite subject of the Virgin and Child, with various saints symmetrically disposed on each side of the throne. He, however, endeavoured to vary the accessory personages, the arrangement of the groups, the architecture and the landscape, which he usually enlivened by the introduction of graceful little figures. A specimen of this may be seen in the charming picture which decorates the Carrara gallery at Bergamo.[2]

Andrea Previtali, who flourished at the same period, has still higher claims to our interest, on account of his

[1] Painting was held in honour at Bergamo as early as the close of the thirteenth century, and we may even venture to assert, that about the middle of the fourteenth it already possessed a school. Paxino di Nova and his brother Pietro are mentioned on several occasions in the registers of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. No artist of any renown seems to have succeeded them during the whole of the fifteenth century, or, indeed, until the influence of Giovanni Bellini gave a new impulse to art, after it had languished in Bergamo for nearly a hundred years.

[2] This picture bears the date of 1500. There is another at Genoa, painted in 1514, representing the same subject, with one important dif-

more intimate and well-authenticated connexion with Giovanni Bellini, whose most distinguished pupil he at first was, and whom he soon surpassed in the charm of his colouring and the grace and delicacy of his contours. Such, at least, is Tassi's opinion, in his history of the artists of Bergamo; and whoever has seen Previtali's productions in his native city, where his happiest inspirations are to be found, must admit that this opinion is founded on something better than a mere patriotic illusion. Whoever has seen the picture of St. Benedict in the cathedral, that of St. Ursula in the midst of her companions in the church of St. Agostino, the Descent from the Cross in St. Andrea, but above all the masterpiece which is in the church of Santo Spirito, and which represents St. John the Baptist standing on a sort of pedestal, with St. Nicholas and St. Bartholomew on his right, and on his left St. Joseph and St. James martyr and archdeacon of Bergamo,—whoever, I say, has experienced the lively and delicious impression which these works, and particularly the last, must necessarily produce on the mind of every spectator who has retained a love for Christian poetry, cannot fail to recognise the superiority of Previtali, in certain respects, over the other disciples of Bellini, and to assign him

ference: here the infant Jesus gives his blessing to a man who is kneeling before him; his patron, St. Anthony, stands beside him, whilst his wife, in the same attitude, is protected by St. Catherine. Here we have the ideal of a family picture at a time when art and faith were still closely united. Cariano executed, besides, many fresco paintings, both for the exterior and interior of various palaces. It should be remarked that he was the first who sought to reproduce scenes from the poem of Ariosto. His last works bear the date of 1519, but the year of his death is unknown.

an eminent place amongst the artists who continued to adhere faithfully to the religious traditions. We must also add, that his portraits have been frequently confounded with those of his master, that his religious compositions were almost always embellished with some smiling landscape,[1] and that they possessed an irresistible charm even for the greatest painters: for an Annunciation painted by him in a church at Ceneda so captivated Titian, whose imagination was then uncorrupted, that he never failed to pass an hour in contemplation before it whenever he quitted Venice to visit Cadore, his native city.

Two other painters of Bergamo, contemporaries of Cariano and Previtali, are also mentioned by Tassi as having belonged, at least in the style of their compositions, to the old Venetian school, as represented by Giovanni Bellini. The name of the first was Gavio, who has left several pictures at Bergamo all representing the same *motif*, namely, the Virgin, the infant Christ, and several Saints, with but little variation in the treatment. The other is Antonio Bissolo, who, according to Tassi, adopted the manner of the artists of the fifteenth century, generally representing his personages in simple and uniform attitudes, and aiming more at dignity than variety in his compositions.[2]

[1] We may see in Tassi (*Vite dei Pittori e Scultori Bergamaschi*, p. 41,) a long enumeration of the works with which Andrea Previtali ornamented the churches of Bergamo.

[2] Tassi, *ibid.* p. 52. It is in this style that Bissolo has painted St. Peter between two other saints in the church of S. Cristofero di Seriate, (1509); a Madonna, surrounded by the same personages, in that of the Augustins of Almenno (1515); and St. Lawrence, between St. John and St. Barnabas, in S. Pietro in colle aperto.

The remarkable fertility of this school at the commencement of the sixteenth century, together with the purity of the traditions by which it was always inspired, will explain why its destinies were so brilliant in the period which immediately followed, when it produced such artists as Palma Vecchio and Lorenzo Lotto.

The influence of Giovanni Bellini was much less sensibly felt at Padua and the adjoining country, because it was there counterbalanced by the influence of Mantegna; and possibly, also, because the classical enthusiasm which at that time prevailed in the universities[1] was hardly compatible with exclusively religious inspirations in art.

But in the march of Treviso and in Friouli, Bellini had not to contend with obstacles of this kind. At Treviso his disciple, Bissolo, was a graceful continuator of his doctrines,[2] while his disciple Pennacchi surpassed all the painters of this school in the grandiose character of his conceptions. The cathedral of Treviso contains an Assumption by this artist, in which the noble figures of the apostles below are particularly striking, and have been considered worthy of the pencil of Giorgione;[3] while

[1] It is worthy of attention, that at the period of the general infatuation for the revival of Greek and Latin literature, the cities which possessed the most flourishing universities were precisely those least distinguished for art. At Bologna there was a complete interval from Francia to the Caracci; at Siena we find a few imitators of foreign artists; and at Pisa, Pavia, and Padua, there is hardly anything worthy to find a place in the history of art.

[2] His pictures are very rare. A very beautiful one may be seen in the Academia delle belle Arti at Venice. It represents Christ offering St. Catherine the choice of a crown of gold or a crown of thorns.

[3] Crico, *Lettere sulle belle arti Trevigiane.*

the half-length figures of prophets which he painted on the ceilings of two churches, viz. la Madonna degli Angeli at Murano, and la Madonna dei Miracoli at Venice, must always excite our admiration. In these compositions Pennacchi may be said to have been the true and only precursor of Michael Angelo. Other painters had, indeed, attempted this majestic subject, but their pencil had been quite unequal to do it justice.[1]

The doctrines of Giovanni Bellini exercised a still more unbounded influence in Friouli. It was there that Martini, one of his favourite disciples, better known under the name of Pellegrino da San Daniele, founded a school, interesting both for the purity and the multiplicity of its productions, which are too little known to the traveller. Pellegrino might, without difficulty, have participated in the brilliant advantages enjoyed by the artists established in the metropolis, and the especial protection with which he was honoured by the Duke of Ferrara would have smoothed any difficulties in his career; but this temptation could not tear him from his native mountains, and his attachment to his country being no less ardent than his love for art, he strove to reconcile these contending feelings by decorating the neighbourhood of Friouli with works which were in harmony with the pure and pious imagination of his countrymen. The Passion of Christ, which he painted in the church of San Daniele, his native village, seems to have been treated with a peculiar predilection, and to have been painted under the combined

[1] At Murano. In the central compartment is a Coronation of the Virgin, in which the type of Christ is of extraordinary beauty.

inspiration of patriotism and piety. His numerous disciples followed in his footsteps with great fidelity,[1] and the pictures they have left in the churches of Udine, their common country, prove them to have been the worthy continuators of the traditions transmitted by their master.[2]

After having followed the religious school of which Giovanni Bellini was the head, in all its ramifications—having pointed out its most remarkable productions according to the order of time and place, we will pause on the confines of an epoch marked by very different characters, and during which painting, throwing off the yoke of the ancient traditions, obeyed the impulse given to it by Giorgione, Titian, and above all by Aretino, who exercised an almost Satanic influence on art. This species of dualism in the Venetian school is so much the more interesting, because the good and evil principles were long in presence of one another—the disciples of Giovanni Bellini having continued to represent and develope his doctrines until the middle of the sixteenth century, that is to say, nearly forty years after the death of Giorgione, and more than twenty after Aretino's arrival at Venice.

If the innovators could justly boast of having introduced certain elements of perfection unknown to their

[1] All the necessary details on Pellegrino da San Daniele and his school may be found in Maniago's excellent work on the fine arts in Friouli.

[2] Four of his disciples deserve to be mentioned: Martini, who painted a beautiful picture of St. Mark for the cathedral, and one of St. Ursula for the church of S. Pietro Martire; Florigorio, who executed the high altar-piece for the parish church of S. Giorgio; Floriani; and Liberale who worked long at Vienna for the Archduke Ferdinand and Maximilian II.

predecessors, at least it was impossible for them to deny to the latter the glory of having rendered the Venetian school, as early as the fifteenth century, pre-eminent over every other for beauty of colour—a kind of excellence which is much less superficial, and even less material, than it is generally thought to be, and which, in fact, belongs to a very elevated order of psychological phenomena.

Painting in Italy seems to have been divided into three principal schools: the Florentine excelled in the knowledge of design, and generally in the representation of the contours and forms; it felt more vividly than any other the beauty of the antique statues, and sculpture and engraving were cultivated in it with a kind of instinctive enthusiasm. The Umbrian school excelled in the expression of the pious emotions and pure affections of the soul; it abounded in contemplative and mystical painters, but having disdained all the treasures of classical antiquity, no sculptor or engraver of any celebrity ever emanated from it. Lastly, the Venetian school excelled in colour, and was always pre-occupied with the desire, or rather the passion, of attaining perfection in this branch of art; and, as if endowed with an intuitive knowledge of her special vocation, set little value on the imitation of Greek and Roman models recommended by the antiquaries, and even displayed an almost invincible repugnance for the combination of lines and forms when they were unaccompanied with the charm of colour.[1]

[1] Agostino Veneziano, although born at Venice, was not a Venetian artist. As an engraver he belongs to the school of Marc Antonio.

This distribution among the three schools of the respective gifts which constitute perfection in painting, offers a striking analogy with the effect that music has been said to produce on the three principal nations of Europe: melody possessing the greatest charm for the Italians; the French attaching more importance to precision, and beating time with such enthusiasm that they often perspire from their exertions; while the Germans, more calm and serious in their enjoyments, consider the harmonious combination of sounds to be the highest delight of music.

When we combine certain physiological and phrenological data with the individual history of those painters who have been the most celebrated as great colourists, we are led to recognise the existence of a mysterious affinity between the organ of music and that which presides over the combination of colour. The two most famous colourists of the Florentine school were, incontestably, Leonardo da Vinci and Fra Bartolomeo; and it is well known that the first was no less admired at Milan as a musician than as a painter, and that musical compositions possessed an irresistible charm for the second. Correggio, who surpassed every other artist in the magical effect of his colouring, had experienced such vivid and delicious impressions from music, that in the sleep immediately preceding his death he dreamt that he had met Palestrina in heaven, and regarded this vision as a foretaste of eternal bliss. But we find a still more decisive argument in the fact that, among the Venetian painters, the passion for music was almost universal; at least in the second period, which closes with the sixteenth century. The introduction of the most illustrious among

them, as the performers of a concert in the magnificent picture of the Marriage of Cana, which forms one of the greatest ornaments of the Louvre, was no arbitrary fiction on the part of Paul Veronese; for it is well known that certain of them were in the habit of meeting frequently, in order to taste this pleasure in common: it was one of the daily enjoyments of Titian in the small palace which he occupied opposite the island of Murano, within hearing of the soft and harmonious songs which issued every evening at sunset, and often through the whole night, from a multitude of gondolas, which at that time animated this part of the Lagune, now so silent and deserted. Vasari relates that Giorgione sang and played so divinely on the lute, that he was often invited to preside at the concerts given by the patricians.[1] Tintoretto possessed this twofold talent almost to the same degree.[2] Bassano is represented to us by Ridolfi as a very skilful musician;[3] and the same praise is bestowed upon Perdenone and Paris Bordone, in terms which lead us to suppose that their proficiency in music was more than common.[4] We have seen that this remark does not apply to the Venetian school alone; and besides Correggio and Leonardo da Vinci, we may mention Benvenuto Garofolo

[1] *Giorgione sonava e cantara nel suo tempo tanto divinamente ch'egli era spesso adoperato a diverse musiche e ragunate di persone nobili.*

[2] *In la istessa città ghe zè un pitor*
Giacomo Tintoreto un bel umor,
Che de musica assae su se dileta:
El sona trà le altre de lauto, etc.
Navigar pittoresco, vento 4.

[3] *Trattenevasi nella musica, nella quale fu peritissima.*

[4] *Paris Bordone fattosi eccellentissimo musico.*

of Ferrara, no less admirable than themselves in the choice and combination of his colours, and who, having become blind in his latter years, consoled himself for the privation of sight by those musical gratifications which he so well understood and valued.[1]

Lastly, we may find a more conclusive example in a country by no means rich in great colourists. Gainsborough, one of the most distinguished artists in this respect that England has produced, had so extraordinary a predilection for vocal and instrumental music, that at the end of a concert he sometimes presented one of his most beautiful landscapes as a recompense to the musician to whom he had been indebted for those moments of ecstasy, to which he attached so high a price.

The question of affinity between the organ of colour and that of music is, however, in this work, purely secondary; the important point to be established being the eminently religious character of the Venetian school in the period we have just surveyed. If painting had its separate history, and was unconnected with the general advance of the human mind, this obstinate devotion in the artists to the Christian traditions would be an isolated and almost imperceptible fact in the annals of the Venetian republic. But as the changes which the fine arts undergo are the surest index of those which are effected at the same time in the popular imagination, the study of them may lead to the most instructive results, and thus become susceptible of the highest interest, even in a philosophical point of view. The works of the

[1] Cittadella, *Vite dei Pittori Ferraresi.*

painter, like those of the poet, when they are recognised, encouraged, and appreciated by his fellow-citizens, are the faithful mirror in which the modifications which the national genius undergoes are successively reflected. Individual inspirations, however original, always so strongly participate in the general state of intellectual development, that they cannot in any manner be said to interfere with the comparative appreciation of the people and the period. Thus we have seen that, at the end of the fifteenth century, Paganism had already taken possession of the Florentine school; and the sermons of Savonarola, together with the testimony furnished by history, represent philosophy, poetry—in a word, all the branches of literature, and even the public morals, as infected by the same contagion. At Venice, on the contrary, without any of those violent shocks administered by Savonarola during ten consecutive years to the Florentines, art maintained its purity until late in the sixteenth century, notwithstanding the classical enthusiasm which showed itself on the surface of society, but which, as it did not penetrate into its inmost depths, did not as yet threaten to dry up those sources of Christian poetry from which the Venetian artists had so largely and universally drawn their inspirations. Thence we may conclude, in accordance with the analogy we have sought to establish between the productions of art and the national genius, that Venice preserved for a longer period than either Rome or Florence the religious impress which so peculiarly distinguishes the Italian republics in the middle ages.

This conclusion, so little in unison with our inveterate

prejudices with regard to Venice, will no doubt be rejected by the greater number of my readers; and nevertheless it is an historical truth which cannot be contested, that Venice, in spite of all that can be said of her secret tribunals, her celebrated courtesans, and her commercial Machiavelism, was the most Christian of all the republics. Unfortunately the greater portion of her annals, written in Latin by official historians, have always presented a mass of materials ready to the hand, which have only been made use of by the mere compiler, or by writers too much imbued with modern rationalism, and too exclusively occupied with the progress and decline of the political greatness of the republic. In approaching such a task, something more is required of us than that artificial identification which consists in transporting ourselves in imagination to the period and country which we intend to describe; it is more especially necessary to be accompanied by that feeling of profound sympathy which cannot exist without an identity of religious belief. If Christians had not so shamefully neglected their own peculiar heritage, they might fearlessly say to all self-styled philosophical writers who interpose themselves between them and the true light of history, what Diogenes said to Alexander when he placed himself between the sun and the philosopher; and this allusion, perfectly applicable to the picture which has been given of the Italian republics, is more peculiarly so to that of Venice, so little understood, so much calumniated, and so severely judged, even by those from whom she had a right to expect more gratitude and justice.

It must not be forgotten that the Venetians were in

the Mediterranean what the Spaniards and the Poles were at the two extremities of Europe; that is to say, one of the three advanced guards of Christianity against the barbarians. That they occasionally profited by the terror they inspired in order to secure success in certain mercantile negotiations, to the prejudice of the neighbouring republics, was no doubt derogatory to the nobleness and grandeur of the part assigned to them in the world; but, after all, this crime is not so great as to efface all the heroism and chivalry by which they were distinguished, and we may affirm, that of all the maritime powers who have succeeded each other on the waters of the Mediterranean, there is not one with whose flag, in a Christian point of view, such honourable recollections are associated. In the seventeenth century it waived there more glorious than ever; and how great were the men charged to sustain its honour! Luigi Mocenigo, the indefatigable defender of the island of Candia, and an object of admiration to the Turks themselves, who, on learning the news of his death, spontaneously put on mourning, and caused their galleys draped with black to pass respectfully before his place of sepulture. Francesco Moresini, whose exploits would be regarded as fabulous were they less authentic, who was justly called the hero of his age, and who is worthy to be compared with his contemporary Sobieski, engaged at another point in a crusade of the same nature, in which the great European powers played the part of indifferent spectators, congratulating themselves on being for ever cured of all religious enthusiasm.

The history of the republic of Venice abounds, during

a long series of centuries, with recollections of this kind; the almost constant hostilities in which they were engaged with the adherents of Islamism must have familiarised the minds of the Venetians with the ideas of martyrdom, sacrifice, and self-devotion to something more lofty, in short, than that narrow-minded patriotism, the source of so much injustice among the pagan nations of antiquity, and also among the moderns paganised, if we may so say, by this spirit of nationality. Although the Venetians were not always exempt from it, we may nevertheless affirm that their peculiar position, and the circumstances in which they found themselves placed, constrained them as it were to rise superior to many sordid temptations. The frequent habit of repeating in their wars against the infidels those beautiful words, which may still be read on the façade of the Palazzo Vendromini, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam,*—the habit of pronouncing in a spirit of faith this sublime prayer, so well placed in the heart and on the lips of the Christian hero whose crowning virtues are humility and courage, would alone have sufficed to call forth every elevated, generous, and chivalrous feeling in their nature. It was, no doubt, this passage of the Psalmist which suggested to the doges and naval commanders the idea of being represented in a kneeling attitude before the infant Christ or the holy Virgin, in the pictures destined to transmit their names or the recollection of their exploits to future generations. This mode of pious commemoration, which offers the touching contrast of an humble attitude with great dignity or glory, continued in use during the whole of the sixteenth century, in spite of the paganism so universally

triumphant elsewhere. After Giovanni Bellini and Catena, came the celebrated artists who adorned the second period of the Venetian school, and who also paid the tribute of their pencil to this interesting subject. It is on this account that pictures representing the Madonna seated, with a Doge or a General kneeling before her, are so frequently to be met with in private collections, in the churches, and above all in the Ducal palace, in which these allegorical compositions, intended to express the close alliance between Religion and the State, seem to have been purposely multiplied, at the sight of all these pious representations, in which patriotism constantly appears subordinate to faith, we cannot refrain from applying to this Christian republic the magnificent eulogium addressed by Horace to Rome, when he congratulated her on being the mistress of the world:—

Dis te minorem, quod geris, imperas.

I am aware that, in the eyes of those philosophers whose prevailing passion consists in tracing effects to their causes, all this is nothing better than religious charlatanism, by the aid of which an oligarchy, no less hypocritical than oppressive, used its power for its own exclusive advantage, and ruled at its will an ignorant and fanatical populace; but this scandalous imputation is entirely contradicted by all the public and private documents, which agree in representing the Venetian nobility as setting the example of the most heroic virtues: and to such an extent were these carried, that we find a greater number of holy personages canonised by the Church at Venice than in all the other aristocratic bodies of the middle ages put together. Several doges have from

this cause become objects of veneration to the Catholic world; not to speak of others, who, led by the determination, afterwards considered so sublime in the Emperor Charles V., voluntarily abdicated the ducal dignity in order to practise in peace the rigours of the cloister. It is true that at Venice, as in the rest of Europe, other centuries were followed by other manners; but whatever point of comparison we select in Italy, whether it be Milan, Naples, Ferrara, or Florence, the advantage will always remain on the side of the Venetian aristocracy, even in its worst days, when the unblushing Aretino made Venice the scene of his infamous orgies. The doge who was carried to die at the foot of the high altar of S. Marco, and who exclaimed as he yielded up his breath, *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum et rempublicam,* was the contemporary of this monster; as was also the virtuous Lorenzo Priuli, elected at the moment when his country was groaning under three plagues, war, pestilence, and famine, and who, on the day of his inauguration, when he ascended the throne in order to address some words of consolation to the people, commenced his discourse with this beautiful prayer of hope and faith: *Etiamsi ambulavero in medio umbræ mortis, non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es.*[1]

During the course, and even at the end of the seventeenth century, this noble impress is still to be found in many of the deliberations of the Venetian senate; and, which is, perhaps, still more conclusive, in the requests addressed to it in order to obtain admission into the

[1] *Fasti ducales*, p. 210. Venezia, 1696.

patriciate. When the Martinengo of Brescia[1] aspired to this honour in 1689, as a recompense for the services rendered by their ancestors to the republic, they put forward, in support of their demand, the threefold recommendation of military glory, science, and religion; thus placing on an equality the services rendered by the sword, by genius, and by prayer. Giovanni Battista Cornaro, the descendant of a still more illustrious family, pleading before the senate the cause of his two sons, the offspring of a marriage which was not approved by the Council of Ten,[2] commenced his eloquent supplication by the following profession of faith:

"From the beginning two altars have been erected in my heart—one to God, the other to my country; and although these two altars are distinct, they nevertheless constitute for me one common worship. Piety towards God and devotion to my country are two effects which spring from the same cause, just as the good citizen and

[1] The history of this family is more like some fabulous recital, so much does it abound in extraordinary men. Their exploits in the wars which Venice sustained at the beginning of the sixteenth century are almost incredible. The most illustrious of them was Girolamo Martinengo, who offered himself to the senate, with his young son, to fight against the Turks, and who died on the journey. Five or six warriors of the same name signalised themselves in the wars of Flanders; among them, a young volunteer of thirteen, who was made general of the Frisian cavalry. We also find three historians; a poet, who took for his subject the *Triumph of the faith and of the holy martyrs;* a bishop of Torcello, who died in the odour of sanctity; and a Jesuit, who died at Bologna in 1630, a victim to his zeal in nursing those infected with the plague; and all this in less than half a century.

[2] In such cases the children were excluded from the functions and privileges which belonged of right to the patrician families.

the good Christian are two characters which are included in the general notion of true religion. This is taught us by our Divine Master, who loved the gates of Sion better than all the tabernacles of Jacob. Therefore, in all the public posts confided to me, I have always considered that, when I was in the service of my country, I was at the same time in the service of Christ; and even in my military commands I have never ceased to govern my conduct by the same maxim."[1]

If, instead of contenting ourselves with those external events which appear on the surface of history, we would take the trouble, or rather regard it as an imperative duty, to penetrate more deeply into the subject, and would consult the archives which best reveal the bent of the national genius, what valuable and unlooked-for discoveries might result from such an examination! what a different aspect and colour would be given to the annals of Christian nations, and particularly to those of the republic of Venice! A multitude of local details, hitherto lost or imperceptible amid the general mass of facts, would then be transformed into brilliant testimonies of its former grandeur; and in proportion as men and events appeared to us in their true light and character, we should feel our heart, imagination, and intellect, rise more and more superior to the prejudices of

[1] This fragment is translated word for word from the original document preserved in the library of St. Marco, among an immense collection of manuscripts consecrated to the history of the principal patrician families. This collection is the more interesting from its having been the fruits of the sad and solitary leisure of a state prisoner. From this source I have drawn all the curious details I have cited above.

publicists and philosophers, and should exclaim with a poet, whose sympathy has more than once enhanced my enjoyment in the presence of those masterpieces which we have admired together:—

> "Prime model of a Christian commonwealth,
> Thou wise simplicity, which present men
> Calumniate, not conceiving joy is mine
> That I have read and learnt thee as I ought;
> Not in the crude compiler's painted shell,
> But in thine own memorials of live stone,
> And in the pictures of thy kneeling princes,
> And in the lofty words on lofty tombs,
> And in the breath of ancient chroniclers,
> And in the music of the outer sea."
>
> R. Monckton Milnes.

Unfortunately, the moral and intellectual degradation of the eighteenth century also extended its ravages to the Lagunes; and so many circumstances conspired to accelerate the decline of the national character, that neither energy nor dignity was to be found in it when the fatal day of its extinction arrived. But these recollections are still too recent to make it possible for us to know and proclaim the whole truth, either with regard to the faults which drew down upon Venice so terrible a chastisement, or the incompetency of those who arrogated to themselves the mission of inflicting it upon her. Both sides are unwilling to raise the veil that covers so many iniquities; some are silent from generosity, others from shame: but it is the generally received opinion that nothing redeemed the degradation of this ignoble fall.

Nothing, in fact, was attempted in the metropolis, where Corruption had long been enthroned with Power; but although the heart of the republic was paralysed,

symptoms of vitality still showed themselves at the extremities: and we may cite, as an example, one of the most obscure cities in the Venetian territories—Perasto, in Dalmatia, which became the theatre of an effusion of patriotic regrets on the day when its inhabitants were required to pass under a foreign dominion, of which few conquering republics can boast of having been the object. When the order was received to take down the Venetian flag and hoist another in its place, all the inhabitants assembled in the principal church in order to celebrate the obsequies of the glorious banner of St. Mark, and bid it farewell in common, before it was deposited as a national relic beneath the high altar. At the close of this solemn and affecting ceremony, the chief magistrate of Perasto, making an effort to repress the feelings which overwhelmed him, pronounced the following short oration:—

"In this bitter and heart-rending moment,—in this last effusion of our love and fidelity for the Venetian government,—we may take the gonfalon of that august republic to witness that our past conduct, and that which has distinguished us in these trying times, gives us the right to pay it on the present occasion this sad but honourable tribute of respect. Our sons will learn from us, and the history of this day will testify to all Europe, that Perasto worthily sustained to the last the honour of the flag confided to her; consecrating it by this solemn farewell, and interring it bathed with the tears of her citizens. Let us weep, my friends! let us give a free course to our grief: but while we close with these sentiments that glorious career which has been ours,

let us turn our eyes to this banner, which represents here, for the last time, the republic of Venice. During three hundred and seventy-seven years we have defended it with valour and fidelity by land and sea, whenever we have been summoned to fight the enemies of the republic, who were also those of our holy religion; during three hundred and seventy-seven years we have always been ready to sacrifice our property, our blood, and our lives in thy defence, O St. Mark! and have ever esteemed ourselves happy in thy service and under thy protection. Aided by thee we have been illustrious and victorious by sea; never have we been known to fly before the enemy —never have we been found vanquished and trembling. If, in these unhappy times, want of foresight, internal discord, usurpation from without, and crimes by which nature and national right have alike been violated, had not caused the name of St. Mark to disappear from Italy, we should have held no sacrifice too great for thee; and, rather than have seen thee vanquished and dishonoured by thy children, we would willingly have braved death itself while invoking thy name. But since we can no longer contribute to thy glory, may an honourable tomb be found for thee in our hearts, and may our tears be thy purest and noblest eulogium."

Posterity, more just and more generous than ourselves, will rather see the history of the republic of Venice closed by this scene, and by this oration, than by the recital of the shameful abdication of its last doge.

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